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THE NATIONS OF TO-DAY

A New History of the World

EDITED BY JOHN BUCHAN

THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

AND

THE GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG

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JOHN BUCHAN

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THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM AND THE GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG

THE NATIONS OF TO-DAY

A New History of the World

EDITED BY JOHN BUCHAN

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BY

G. W. T. OMOND, M.A.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THIS series has been undertaken to provide for the ordinary citizen a popular account of the history of his own and other nations, a chronicle of those movements of the past of which the effect is not yet exhausted, and which are still potent for the peace and comfort of the present. The writers conceive history as a living thing of the most urgent consequence to the men of to-day ; they regard the world around us as an organic growth dependent upon a long historic ancestry. The modern view of history—apart from the pedantry of certain specialists —is a large view, subordinating the mere vicissitudes of dynasties and parliaments to those more fateful events which are the true milestones of civilisation. Clio has become an active goddess and her eyes range far. History is, of course, like all sciences, the quest for a particular kind of truth, but that word " truth " has been given a generous interpretation. The older type of historian was apt to interest himself chiefly in the doings of kings and statesmen, the campaigns of generals and the contests of parties. These no doubt are important, but they are not the whole, and to insist upon them to the exclusion of all else is to make the past an unfeatured wilderness, where the only personalities are generals on horseback, judges in ermine and monarchs in purple. Nowadays, whatever we may lack in art, we have gained in science. The plain man has come to his own, and, as Lord Acton has put it, " The true historian must now take his meals in the kitchen."

The War brought the meaning of history home to the world. Events which befell long ago suddenly became disruptive forces to shatter a man's ease, and he realised that what had seemed only a phrase in the textbooks might be a thing to die for. The Armistice left an infinity of problems, no one of which could be settled without tracing its roots into the past. Both time and space seemed to have " closed up." Whether we like it or not, our isolation is shattered, and not the remotest nation can now draw in its skirts from its neighbours. The consequence must be that even those who are averse to science, and prefer to settle everything by rule of thumb, will be forced

to reconsider their views. Foreign politics have become again, as they were in the age of Pitt and Castlereagh, of Palmerston and Disraeli, urgent matters for every electorate. The average citizen recognises that the popular neglect of the subject contributed in no small degree to the War, and that problems in foreign affairs are as vital to him as questions of tariff and income tax. Once it used to be believed that a country might be rich while its neighbours were poor; now even the dullest is aware that economically the whole world is tightly bound together, and that the poverty of a part lessens the prosperity of the whole. A merchant finds his profits shrinking because of the rate of exchange in a land which was his chief market; he finds his necessary raw material costly and scarce because of the dislocation of industry in some far-away country. He recognises that no nation is commercially sufficient to itself, and he finds himself crippled, not by the success, but by the failure of his foreign colleagues. It is the same in other matters than commerce. Peace is every man's chief interest, but a partial peace is impossible. The world is so closely linked that one recalcitrant unit may penalise all the others.

In these circumstances it is inevitable that interest in foreign countries, often an unwilling and angry interest, should be compulsory for large classes which up to now have scarcely given the matter a thought. An understanding of foreign conditions—though at first it may not be a very sympathetic understanding—is forced upon us by the needs of our daily life. This understanding, if it is to be of the slightest value, must be based upon some knowledge of history, and Clio will be compelled to descend from the schools to the market-place. Of all the movements of the day none is more hopeful than the spread through all classes of a real, though often incoherent, desire for education. Partly it is a fruit of the War. Men realise that battles were not won by muddling through; that as long as we muddled we stuck fast, and that when we won it was because we used our brains to better purpose than our opponents. Partly it is the consequence of the long movement towards self-conscious citizenship, which some call democracy. Most thinking people to-day believe that knowledge spread in the widest commonalty is the only cure for many ills. They believe that education in the most real sense does not stop with school or college; indeed, that true education may only begin when the orthodox curriculum is finished. They believe, further, that this fuller training comes by a man's own efforts and is not necessarily dependent

upon certain advantages in his early years. Finally, they are assured that true education cannot be merely technical or professional instruction ; that it must deal in the larger sense with what are called the "humanities." If this diagnosis is correct, then the study of history must play a major part in the equipment of the citizen of the future.

I propose in these few pages to suggest certain reasons why the cultivation of the historical sense is of special value at this moment. The utilitarian arguments are obvious enough, but I would add to them certain considerations of another kind.

Man, as we know, is long-descended, and so are human society and the State. That society is a complex thing, the result of a slow organic growth and no mere artificial machine. In a living thing such as the State growth must be continuous, like the growth of a plant. Every gardener knows that in the tending of plants you cannot make violent changes, that you cannot transplant a well-grown tree at your pleasure from a wooded valley to the bare summit of a hill, that you cannot teach rhododendrons to love lime, or grow plants which need sun and dry soil in a shady bog. A new machine-made thing is simple, but the organic is always subtle and complex. Now, half the mischiefs in politics come from a foolish simplification. Take two familiar conceptions, the "political man" and the "economic man." Those who regard the citizen purely as a political animal, divorce him from all other aspects, moral and spiritual, in framing their theory of the State. In the same way the "economic man" is isolated from all other relations, and, if he is allowed to escape from the cage of economic science into political theory, will work havoc in that delicate sphere. Both are false conceptions, if our problem is to find out the best way to make actual human beings live together in happiness and prosperity. Neither, as a matter of fact, ever existed or could exist, and any polity based upon either would have the harshness and rigidity and weakness of a machine.

We have seen two creeds grow up rooted in these abstractions, and the error of both lies in the fact that they are utterly unhistorical, that they have been framed without any sense of the continuity of history. In what we call Prussianism a citizen was regarded as a cog in a vast machine called the State, to which he surrendered his liberty of judgment and his standard of morals. He had no rights against it and no personality distinct from it. The machine admitted no ethical principles which might interfere with its success, and the

citizen, whatever his private virtues, was compelled to conform to this inverted anarchy. Moreover, the directors of the machine regarded the world as if it were a smooth, flat high-road. If there were hollows and hills created by time, they must be flattened out to make the progress of the machine smoother and swifter. The past had no meaning ; all problems were considered on the supposition that human nature was like a mathematical quantity, and that solutions could be obtained by an austere mathematical process. The result was tyranny, a highly efficient tyranny, which nevertheless was bound to break its head upon the complexities of human nature. Such was Prussianism, against which we fought for four years, and which for the time is out of fashion. Bolshevism, to use the convenient word, started with exactly the same view. It believed that you could wipe the slate quite clean and write on it what you pleased, that you could build a new world with human beings as if they were little square blocks in a child's box of bricks. Karl Marx, from whom it derived much of its dogma, interpreted history as only the result of economic forces ; he isolated the economic aspect of man from every other aspect and desired to re-create society on a purely economic basis. Bolshevism, though it wandered very far from Marx's doctrine, had a similar point of view. It sought with one sweep of the sponge to blot out all past history, and imagined that it could build its castles of bricks without troubling about foundations. It also was a tyranny, the worse tyranny of the two, perhaps, because it was the stupider. It has had its triumphs and its failures, and would now appear to be declining ; but it, or something of the sort, will come again, since it represents the eternal instinct of theorists who disregard history and who would mechanise and unduly simplify human life.

There will always be much rootless stuff in the world. In almost every age the creed which lies at the back of Bolshevism and Prussianism is preached in some form or other. The revolutionary and the reactionary are alike devotees of the mechanical. The safeguard against experiments which can only end in chaos is the wide diffusion of the historical sense, and the recognition that " counsels to which Time hath not been called, Time will not ratify."

The second reason is that a sense of history is a safeguard against another form of abstraction. Ever since the War the world has indulged in a debauch of theorising, and the consequence has been an orgy of catchwords and formulas, which,

unless they are critically examined, are bound to turn political discussion into a desert. The weakening of the substance of many accepted creeds seems to have disposed men to cling more feverishly to their shibboleths. Take any of our contemporary phrases—" self-determination," " liberty," " the right to work," " the right to maintenance," " the proletariat," " class consciousness," " international solidarity," and so forth. They all have a kind of dim meaning, but as they are currently used they have many very different meanings, and these meanings are often contradictory. I think it was Lord Acton who once said he had counted two hundred definitions of " liberty." Abraham Lincoln's words are worth remembering: " The world has never yet had a good definition of the word ' liberty,' and the American people just now are much in want of one. We are all declaring for liberty; but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. We assume the word ' liberty ' to mean that each worker can do as he pleases with himself and the product of his labour, while, on the other hand, it may mean that some man can do as he pleases with other men and the product of other men's labour." Are we not in the same difficulty to-day? Perhaps the worst sinner in this respect is the word " democracy." As commonly used, it has a dozen quite distinct meanings, when it has any meaning at all, and we are all familiar in political discussions with the circular argument—that such and such a measure is good for the people because it is democratic; and if it be asked why it is democratic, the answer is " Because it is good for the people." " Democratic " really describes that form of government in which the policy of the State is determined and its business conducted by the will of the majority of its citizens, expressed through some regular channel. It is a word which denotes machinery, not purpose. " Popular," often used as an equivalent, means merely that the bulk of the people approve of a particular mode of government. " Liberal," the other assumed equivalent, implies those notions of freedom, toleration and pacific progress which lie at the roots of Western civilisation. The words are clearly not interchangeable. A policy or a government may be popular without being liberal or democratic; there have been highly popular tyrannies; the German policy of 1914 was popular, but it was not liberal, nor was Germany a democracy. America is a democracy, but it is not always liberal; the French Republic has at various times in its history been both liberal and democratic without being popular. Accurately employed, " democratic " describes a

particular method, "popular" an historical fact, "liberal" a quality and an ideal. The study of history will make us chary about the loud, vague use of formulas. It will make us anxious to see catchwords in their historical relations, and will help us to realise the maleficent effect of phrases which have a fine rhetorical appeal, but very little concrete meaning. If political science is to be anything but a vicious form of casuistry it is very necessary to give its terms an exact interpretation, for their slipshod use will tend to create false oppositions and conceal fundamental agreements, and thereby waste the energy of mankind in empty disputation.

The third reason for the study of history is that it enables a man to take a balanced view of current problems, for a memory stored with historical parallels is the best preventive both against panic and over-confidence. Such a view does not imply the hard-and-fast deduction of so-called laws, which was a habit of many of the historians of the nineteenth century. Exact parallels with the past are hard to find, and nothing is easier than to draw false conclusions. A facile philosophy of history is, as Stubbs once said, "in nine cases out of ten a generalisation founded rather on the ignorance of points in which particulars differ, than in any strong grasp of one in which they agree." Precedents from the past have often been used with disastrous results. In our own Civil War the dubious behaviour of the Israelites on various occasions was made an argument for countless blunders and tyrannies. In the same way the French Revolution has been used as a kind of arsenal for bogus parallels, both by revolutionaries and conservatives, and the most innocent reformers have been identified with Robespierre and St. Just. During the Great War the air was thick with these false precedents. In the Gallipoli Expedition, for example, it was possible to draw an ingenious parallel between that affair and the Athenian Expedition to Syracuse, and much needless depression was the consequence. At the outbreak of the Russian Revolution there were many who saw in it an exact equivalent to the Revolution of 1788 and imagined that the new Russian revolutionary armies would be as invincible as those which repelled the invaders of France. There have been eminent teachers in recent years whose mind has been so obsessed with certain superficial resemblances between the third century of the Christian era and our own times that they have prophesied an impending twilight of civilisation. Those of us who have been engaged in arguing the

case for the League of Nations are confronted by its opponents with a dozen inaccurate parallels from history, and the famous plea of the " thin edge of the wedge " is usually based upon a mistaken use of the same armoury.

A wise man will be chary of drawing dapper parallels and interpreting an historical lesson too rigidly. At the same time there are certain general deductions which are sound and helpful. For example, we all talk too glibly of revolution, and many imagine that, whether they like it or not, a clean cut can be made, and the course of national life turned suddenly and violently in a different direction. But history gives no warrant for such a view. There have been many thousands of revolutions since the world began ; nearly all have been the work of minorities, often small minorities ; and nearly all, after a shorter or longer period of success, have utterly failed. The French Revolution altered the face of the world, but only when it had ceased to be a revolution, and had developed into an absolute monarchy. So with the various outbreaks of 1848. So conspicuously with the Russian Revolution of to-day, which has developed principles the exact opposite of those with which it started. The exception proves the rule, as we see in the case of our own English Revolution of 1688. Properly considered, that was not a revolution, but a reaction. The revolution had been against the personal and unlimited monarchy of the Stuarts. In 1688 there was a return to the normal development of English society, which had been violently broken. It may fairly be said that a revolution to be successful must be a reaction—that is, it must be a return to an organic historical sequence, which for some reason or other has been interrupted.

Parallels are not to be trusted, if it is attempted to elaborate them in detail, but a sober and scientific generalisation may be of high practical value. At the close of the Great War many people indulged in roseate forecasts of a new world—a land fit for heroes to live in, a land inspired with the spirit of the trenches, a land of co-operation and national and international goodwill. Such hasty idealists were curiously blind to the lessons of the past, and had they considered what happened after the Napoleonic wars they might have found a juster perspective. With a curious exactness the history of the three years after Waterloo has repeated itself to-day. There were the same economic troubles—the same rise in the cost of living, with which wages could not keep pace ; the same shrinking of foreign exports owing to difficulties of

exchange ; the same cataclysmic descent of agricultural prices from the high levels of the war ; the same hostility to profiteers ; the same revolt against high taxation, and the same impossibility of balancing budgets without it. The Property tax then was the equivalent of our Excess Profits tax, and it is interesting to note that it was abolished in spite of the Government because the commercial community rose against it. There was the same dread of revolution, and the same blunders in the handling of labour, and there was relatively far greater suffering. Yet the land, in spite of countless mistakes, passed through the crisis and emerged into the sunlight of prosperity. In this case historic precedent is not without its warrant for hope.

One charge has been brought against the study of history—that it may kill reforming zeal. This has been well put by Lord Morley : "The study of all the successive stages and beliefs, institutions, laws, forms of art, only too soon grows into a substitute for practical criticism of all these things upon their merits and in themselves. Too exclusive attention to dynamic aspects weakens the energetic duties of the static. The method of history is used merely like any other scientific instrument. There is no more conscience in your comparative history than there is in comparative anatomy. You arrange ideals in classes and series ; but the classified ideal loses its vital spark and halo." There is justice in the warning, for a man may easily fall into the mood in which he sees everything as a repetition of the past, and the world bound on the iron bed of necessity, and may therefore lose his vitality and zest in the practical work of to-day. It is a danger to be guarded against, but to me it seems a far less urgent menace than its opposite—the tendency to forget the past and to adventure in a raw new world without any chart to guide us. History gives us a kind of chart, and we dare not surrender even a small rushlight in the darkness. The hasty reformer who does not remember the past will find himself condemned to repeat it.

There is little to sympathise with in the type of mind which is always inculcating a lack-lustre moderation, and which has attained to such a pitch of abstraction that it finds nothing worth doing and prefers to stagnate in ironic contemplation. Nor is there more to be said for the temper which is always halving differences in a problem and trying to find a middle course. The middle course, mechanically defined, may be the wrong course. The business of a man steering up a difficult estuary is to keep to the deep-water channel, and that channel

may at one hour take him near the left shore and at another hour close to the right shore. The path of false moderation sticks to the exact middle of the channel, and will almost certainly land the pilot on a sandbank. These are the vices that spring from a narrow study of history and the remedy is a broader and juster interpretation. At one season it may be necessary to be a violent innovator, and at another to be a conservative ; but the point is that a clear objective must be there, and some chart of the course to steer by. History does not provide a perfect chart, but it gives us something better than guess-work. It is a bridle on crude haste ; but it is not less a spur for timidity and false moderation. Above all it is a guide and a comforter to sane idealism. " The true Past departs not," Carlyle wrote, " nothing that was worthy in the Past departs ; no Truth or Goodness realised by man ever dies, or can die ; but all is still here, and, recognised or not, lives and works through endless change."

JOHN BUCHAN.

NOTE ON THE SPELLING OF PLACE-NAMES

Amid the various spellings, Dutch, Flemish, French, English, and German, of place-names in Belgium and the Netherlands generally, it has not been easy to arrive at a solution which will satisfy everyone. Should it be Luxembourg or Luxemburg? Limburg or Limbourg? Maastricht or Maestricht? Hainaut or Hainault? Schelde, Escaut, or Scheldt? Nymeguen, Nimegen, or Nijmegen? Ryswick or Rijswijk? Lombaert-, Lombaerd-, or Lombartzyde? Ypres or Yperen? Yssel or Ijssel? Kadzand or Cadsand? etc., etc. For names have varied in the course of history according to the country in possession and according to the celebrity of the places mentioned.

Whilst therefore the "conventional" British names for the better-known towns (Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp, Ostend, etc.) have been retained, it has been decided, for varying reasons, to spell, throughout, the doubtful names given in the above paragraph in accordance with the first-mentioned variety.—Ed.

NOTE

THE whole of this volume has been written by Mr. G. W. T. Omond, M.A., from the knowledge of Belgium acquired by him during his long residence in that country.

The actual issue of the volume has been supervised by Major-General Lord Edward Gleichen.

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A—HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

THE DEBATABLE LANDS: DOWN TO 1830

NOTHING in the scenery and natural features of the region known from time immemorial as the Low Countries can explain the important position which that small corner of Europe has always occupied, and still occupies, in European history. It would be difficult to find elsewhere anything more dreary and monotonous than the line of sand-hills which extend for between forty and fifty miles from the mouth of the Schelde westwards into France. The aspect of the Flemish coast is the same from end to end. The sea rolls in upon the yellow beach, which is unbroken by rocks or cliffs. Above the beach are the dunes, a long range of sand-hills tossed into all sorts of queer shapes by the wind, on which nothing can grow but rushes or stunted Lombardy poplars, and which reach their highest point, the Hoogenblekker, about one hundred feet above the sea, near Coxyde, a fishing village four or five miles from Nieuport. Behind the dunes a strip of undulating ground, seldom more than a bare mile in width, covered with scanty vegetation, moss, and rushes, connects the barren sand-hills with the cultivated farms, green fields, and woodlands of the Flemish plain. On the other side of the Channel the chalk cliffs and rocky coasts of England have kept the waves in check; but the dunes were, for many long years, the only barrier against the encroachment of the sea on Flanders. They are, however, a very weak protection against the storms of autumn and winter. The sand drifts like snow before the wind, and the outlines of these miniature mountain-ranges often change in a single night. At one time, many centuries ago, this part of Flanders which is now so bare, was, it seems to be proved, covered by forests, the remains of which are still sometimes found beneath the subsoil inland and under the sea. When the great change came is unknown; but the process was probably gradual. At an early period the fight against the invasions of the sea began; the first dykes are said to have

been made in the tenth century. Now only a few traces of them can be found, buried beneath the sand.[1]

The wild storms of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries changed the appearance of the coast of Flanders. Nieuport rose in consequence of one of these convulsions of Nature, when the inhabitants of Lombaertzyde, which was then a seaport, were driven by the tempests to the inland village of Santhoven, the name of which they changed to " Neoportus " —the new harbour. This was in the beginning of the twelfth century, and thenceforth the struggle against the waves went on incessantly. It was carried on under the utmost difficulties. The sea burst in with resistless force upon the low-lying ground, washing away the dunes and swallowing up whole towns. In the thirteenth century there was a catastrophe of appalling dimensions, long known as the Great Storm, when 40,000 Flemish men and women perished. This was the tempest which overran the Dutch coast, and formed the Zuyder Zee. In the following century the town of Scarphout, in Flanders, was destroyed, and the inhabitants built a new town on higher ground, and called it Blankenberghe. Ever since those days this constant warfare against the storms has continued ; and now the waters appear to be bridled. But anyone who has watched the North Sea at high tide on a stormy day beating on the shores of Flanders, and observed how the dunes yield to the pressure of the wind and waves, can have no difficulty in understanding how the peril of the ocean made necessary the great modern dykes which have been constructed at such expense all along the coast.

Behind the dunes the level plain of Flanders stretches inland. Part of it near the coast lies below the level of the sea, from which the dykes protect it. It is sedulously cultivated, and, in spite of the flatness of the fields, has a certain attraction of its own. There is, however, no scenery to excite the admiration of travellers ; for, though in the towns many of the buildings are matchless examples of mediæval architecture, nature has done nothing for the landscape.

Farther inland, beyond the Flemish plain, the country becomes undulating and wooded ; and there is a scene of exquisite beauty where the Meuse flows, between steep banks clothed with trees, and broken here and there by bold, outstanding pinnacles of rock, past Dinant, Namur, and Huy on its way to the famous city of Liége. Beyond the Valley of the Meuse the scenery becomes more and more picturesque, till

[1] Bortier, *Le Littoral de la Flandre au IX^e^ et au XIX^e^ Siècles.*

at last the broad tableland of the Ardennes begins, a district of pine, oak, and beech forests, with hills rising to more than 1,500 feet above sea-level.

A variety of features is thus presented by the coast-line, by the flat plains of Flanders and the other provinces between the Meuse and the sea, and by the wild, rolling Ardennes. But, with the exception of the coast-line, they are not very different from what is seen in other countries, and have had no influence on the fortunes of the Belgian provinces. Nevertheless, there is no part of Europe whose history has been so much influenced by its geographical position.

During many long years the situation of the Low Countries on the map of Europe made them a prey to the Franks, the Vandals, the Frisians, and the other warriors whose hordes poured into Western Europe after their Roman conquerors had passed away, until at last they came under the sway of Charlemagne. After his death and burial (A.D. 814) at Aix la Chapelle (Aachen), and after the disruption of his Empire, the Low Countries entered on that period of their history, lasting for many centuries, during which they passed from hand to hand. Even if there had been a family, heirs of Charlemagne, ruling from Aix-la-Chapelle, it may well be doubted whether they could have long retained possession of their domain; for it lay, without natural boundaries, between Germany and France. In that simple geographical fact is to be found the key to those perpetual changes of ownership which have made the Southern Netherlands the debatable lands of Europe.

But if the Flemish towns were frequently the victims of war, they were also highly favoured by the international commerce which grew in importance side by side with the growth of civilisation. The easiest trade-route for the merchants of France and Germany lay through them; and their situation near the Channel and the North Sea made them favourite markets for the English. "In the cities of Flanders had arisen manufacturing populations which supplied the countries round with the products of the loom. To the Ghent and Bruges of the Middle Ages England stood in the same relation as that which the Australian colonies hold to the Leeds and Bradford of our own day. The sheep which grazed on the wide, unenclosed pasturelands of our island formed a great part of the wealth of England, and that wealth depended on the flourishing trade with the Flemish towns in which English wool was converted into cloth." [1]

[1] Gardiner.

When, therefore, Edward III claimed the throne of France, and the Hundred Years War began, it was of vital importance to the trade of Flanders and England that the merchants of the two countries should maintain friendly relations with each other. But Philip of Valois had persuaded the Count of Flanders of that day, Louis de Nevers, to order the arrest of all the English in Flanders; and Edward had retaliated by arresting all the Flemings who were in England. He also forbade the export of English wool to Flanders. The Flemish weavers found themselves on the road to ruin; and, having no interest in the question at issue between the two Kings, apart from its effect on their commercial prosperity, they succeeded, under the leadership of Jacques van Artevelde and with the assent of Philip, in arranging that Flanders should be neutral during the war. The French King, however, did not keep faith with the Flemings, who were his vassals, but committed acts of aggression against them. An alliance of England, Brabant, and the chief Flemish Communes against France was forthwith concluded.

Early in the war, in the summer of 1340, the coast of Flanders was the scene of a great event in the naval history of England. The town of Sluis is now quite inland; but in the fourteenth century it was a sea-port on a bay where the Zwijn, the channel up which ships in those days sailed to Bruges, joined the sea. In June 1340 Edward, who was then in England, hearing that an immense number of French ships-of-war were at anchor in the Zwijn, set sail to give them battle with a squadron of 300 vessels. The English fleet anchored off the coast between Blankenberghe and Heyst on the evening of June 23; and from the dunes the English scouts saw the masts of the French ships in the Zwijn. As soon as there was light next morning the English weighed anchor, and sailed along the coast to the east, passing the sands where now is Zeebrugge, till they opened the mouth of the Zwijn, and saw the French ships crowding the entrance, "their masts appearing to be in a great wood," and beyond them the walls of Sluis rising from the wet sands left by the falling tide. As soon as the tide began to flow the English steered into the channel, and came to close quarters, ship to ship. They were completely outnumbered; but the famous archers, who six years later were to do such execution at Crécy, lined the bulwarks, shouting "St George for England," and poured in a tempest of arrows so thick and fast that men fell from the tops of the French ships like leaves before a storm. More ships, coming

from the North of England, arrived; and hordes of Flemings from the coast, even from the inland towns as far away as Ypres, came swarming in boats to join in the attack. When the great battle ended at sunset the French fleet had ceased to exist, except a few ships which escaped when it was dark. It is strange to think that Flemish peasants work, and cattle feed, and travellers can walk about dryshod where the waves were rolling in on that mid-summer's morning, and that far beneath the grass the timbers of so many stout ships and the bones of so many valiant seamen have long since mouldered away. And he who wanders about the scene of these events must have a very dull imagination if his fancy is not kindled by many thoughts when he pictures to himself the famous battle of Sluis, and then remembers that other naval feat of arms at midnight only a few miles away, which will never be forgotten so long as the column with the challenge "St. George for England" stands on the Flemish shore at Zeebrugge.

Though the geographical situation of the territory lying between the Meuse and the North Sea made it a common market-place for the rest of Europe, to the great profit of the inhabitants, many of the towns suffered so much from the endless wars that it is difficult to see how they escaped utter ruin. The strategic position of Ypres, for example, in a part of Flanders which was seldom left in peace, was such that it may almost be said to have existed in the midst of literally perpetual warfare, a state of things which continued through the Middle Ages and down to modern times.[1] In the first years of the fourteenth century the citizens took part in the famous battle of the Golden Spurs near Courtrai, and celebrated their victory over the French by forming the Confraternity of the Archers of St. Sebastian, which still exists. After the battle of Sluis they formed another Society, the Confraternity of St. Michael, which lasted till the wars of the French Republic. An English army attacked the town, then defended by a wooden stockade, in the fourteenth century, but were repulsed after a long and bloody siege, and forced to retreat, leaving heaps of dead behind them. It was the same year after year, while the tide of war never ceased to roll backwards and forwards over Flanders. But Ypres flourished in the midst of all these horrors. At the beginning of the thirteenth century the foundation-stone of the majestic Cloth Hall, which stood till

[1] In the seventeenth century Vauban described Ypres as a place "formerly great, populous, and busy, but much reduced by the frequent sedition and revolts of its population, and by the great wars it has endured."

the war of 1914–18, was laid by Baldwin of Constantinople, Count of Flanders; and for two hundred years the merchants of Ypres were among the most thriving business men in Flanders.

When Ypres and other famous towns were at the height of their prosperity, five centuries had passed away since the Treaty of Verdun (843) divided the Empire of Charlemagne among his three grandsons. Twenty years after the settlement which gave Germany to Louis, France to Charles, and the intervening territory between the Rhine and the Schelde to Lothaire, Charles conveyed Flanders as an hereditary fief to his son-in-law Baldwin of the Iron Arm; and as time went on the Netherlands were gradually divided, under the feudal system, into a number of separate and independent Sovereignties. There were Dukes of Luxembourg, and Counts of Louvain who became Dukes of Brabant. There were Counts of Holland, Zeeland, Flanders, Namur, Limburg, and other lands. There were the powerful Bishops of Utrecht; there were Marquesses of Antwerp, and Barons of Malines, and a dynasty of Bishops, Princes of the Holy Roman Empire, ruling over the ecclesiastical Principality of Liége. They all reigned as practically independent sovereigns, though their dominions were held as fiefs either of France or of the Empire.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century Philip the Hardy, Duke of Burgundy, obtained Flanders by his marriage to Margaret, daughter of Count Louis de Maele, on whose death the male line of the Flemish Counts became extinct; and soon, by purchase, prudent marriage, lawful succession, and unscrupulous usurpation the House of Burgundy became supreme over the whole of the Netherlands.[1]

These acquisitions were chiefly the work of that Duke Philip who was called "the Good," a title to which he had certainly no just right. A foe to freedom, he determined to

[1] Lord Bryce said that it would be hard to mention any geographical name which has caused more confusion than the name Burgundy; and gave ten senses in which it was most frequently used. "The circle of Burgundy (Kreis Burgund) an administrative division of the Empire, was established by Charles V in 1548; and included the Free Country of Burgundy, and the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands, which Charles inherited from his grandmother Mary, daughter of Charles the Bold. The Free Country of Burgundy (Franche-Comté) lay between the Saône and the Jura, and was a fief of the Empire. The Duchy of Burgundy (Lower Burgundy, Bourgogne), the most northerly part of the old Kingdom of the Burgundians, was always a fief of the Crown of France till the Revolution It was of this Burgundy that Philip the Good and Charles the Bold were Dukes. They were also Counts of the Free Country" (*Holy Roman Empire*, Appendix, Note A).

change, as far as possible, the system of government by the people which had grown up in the Low Countries with the growth of local administration. It is true that when the fifteenth century opened there was perpetual and universal unrest, that town was opposed to town and province to province; that, particularly at Ypres, trade was languishing; that the menace of war was never absent; and that there was much to be said in favour of establishing some form of central administration applicable to the numerous communities which, although independent of each other, had many interests in common, living as they did side by side within a space whose total acreage was scarcely equal to the acreage of Scotland or Ireland. But each town clung to the power of managing its own affairs within its own walls, without advice or interference from without; and the mere fact that the head of the House of Burgundy, who was himself a vassal of France, now united in his own person so many titles of Duke or Count, did not unite the various dominions from which he took these titles. The Low Countries were no more united when the Dukes of Burgundy acquired so much authority in them than they had been before. Nevertheless, Philip resolved to disregard the sentiments of the people, introduce a central administration, and, while prudently maintaining many of the existing institutions, suppress any which might interfere with hi plans.

His task was difficult. It brought him into conflict, to some extent, with the Church and the Nobility, but still more with the whole body of the Communes. These were antagonists to any departure from mediæval tradition, and to the surrender of the least privilege or monopoly which any of them enjoyed; and it was evident that unless some of their exclusive rights were taken away, or curtailed, there could be no centralised government. Philip, however, did not flinch. He began with changes in the administration of the law. Before his time a supreme court of justice had been established, by Philip the Hardy, as a court of appeal from the local tribunals. This court, known in Flanders as the *Raed van Vlaenderen*, or Council of Flanders, was placed at Ghent by Philip the Good. Though French was the official language of the Burgundian Court, the use of Flemish was recognised in the proceedings of the courts of law; and the judges, who were professional jurists, respected the ancient laws and customs of the country, and are said to have done their duty to the satisfaction of the public.

Another innovation was the establishment at Brussels and

The Hague of two "Chambres des Comptes," on the model of one which Philip the Hardy had set up at Lille in 1386. The object of these institutions was to facilitate the raising, by taxation or loans, of money for the use of the Ducal Government. In addition to this, the process of centralisation was carried further by the creation of a "Ducal Council" composed of persons holding high positions in the civilian and military service of the Duke, with a Chancellor, the "Chancelier de Bourgogne," as President.

Another inroad on the old particularist régime was the creation, in 1463, of the States-General, consisting of delegates chosen by the Provincial States, local legislations which had existed for a long time in the different provinces. Taxes could not be legally imposed, nor war declared, without their consent; but the States-General seldom met, and by a judicious distribution of money, honours, or offices the Duke could generally secure their support for any of his measures.

These measures, adroitly calculated to establish, though perhaps only by slow degrees, one central government, and by this means to put the Duke in possession of supreme authority, were so inconsistent with the political traditions of the Low Countries that the Communes resisted them. They saw that, however plausibly the "smooth usurper" might speak, and however cleverly he might conceal his aims, his purpose was to bring their internal affairs under his control, and destroy the institutions which enabled them to enjoy that independent existence to which they were so much attached. The resistance of Bruges to an interference with certain of its local privileges was punished by the execution of some of the burghers, by the infliction of a fine, and by a sentence ordaining that when the Duke next came to the town the Communal Authorities should fall upon their knees before him and humbly beg for mercy. In order to avoid the necessity of asking the States to vote him yearly a supply of money, Philip tried to make the Flemings pay a permanent tax on salt. This was resisted by the people of Ghent, who flew to arms and fought with such desperate courage against a Burgundian army that the Duke ordered his troops to give no quarter; and there was little mercy shown on either side. Ghent was besieged for a year; but at last the defenders were induced to come out. Assisted by a company of English archers, they fought against superior numbers till their force was almost annihilated; and Philip, besides exacting a heavy indemnity, humiliated

the burghers by forcing 2,000 of them to bow before him in their shirts, implore him to pardon them, deliver up the banners of their guilds, and surrender rights of suzerainty which they had exercised over the surrounding country.

Though the career of Philip was stained by many deeds of darkness, and though his treatment of Bruges and Ghent was lenient compared with his treatment of other places, the Burgundian period was the most brilliant in the history of Flanders and Brabant. Brussels became more than ever a city of pomp, gaiety, and pleasure. Eminent persons from other lands were attracted to the Ducal Court. Among their names are found the names of d'Auxy, Fiennes, Clèves-Ravenstein, and many more. Magnificent entertainments followed one upon the other, banquets, dances, tableaux-vivants. Courtiers and ladies vied with each other in the richness of their dress ; and none were more splendid than the Chevaliers of the Order of the Golden Fleece, founded by the Duke, and bestowed only on kings, princes, and the most illustrious nobles in Europe.

The first stone of the Hôtel de Ville had been carved at the beginning of the century ; and in the year 1444 Philip's son and heir, to be known in later years as Charles the Bold, but then a boy of only ten, laid the foundation-stone of the lofty spire, on which they placed the gilded statue of St. Michael which is there to this day. It was in the Burgundian days that a French architect planned the Cathedral of Antwerp and began the work of building it. During the same period the celebrated University of Louvain was founded. Caxton produced at Bruges what is said to have been the first book printed in English. The Burgundian Library, rich in illuminated manuscripts and curious volumes, is still at Brussels. Painting flourished ; and, amid a host of well-known works by famous artists in the fifteenth century, Hubert and John Van Eyck painted the " Adoration of the Immaculate Lamb," which now hangs in the choir of St. Bavon at Ghent.

The long reign of Philip came to an end with his death in June 1467. Motley calls him an adroit dissembler and a practical politician. His son, Charles, Comte de Charolais, who was thirty-four when he became Duke, was neither. Too frank by nature to succeed as a dissembler, he was too rash to be a practical politician. But, like his father, he wished to be an absolute ruler ; and, in his dealings with the provinces and Communes. he was harsh where Philip had been smooth-tongued and, except when he was actively opposed, conciliating

in manner.[1] He disliked the people of Brussels. His father, he used to say, had swollen their riches and their pride beyond all bounds; and he threatened to pull down the walls and gates of the city if his orders were not obeyed. He carried on, and almost completed, the centralising work of his father. He offended the province of Holland by removing the Supreme Court from The Hague to Malines. The clergy and the laity were alienated by his arbitrary proceedings. He made French the only language which might be used in the central administration, where too many Frenchmen and Burgundians were employed; but he did not succeed, any more than his father, in reconciling the various separate communities to a centralised system of government which, however much might be said in its favour, was inconsistent with their traditions and habits of life. The Low Countries, under Charles as under Philip, continued in reality to be a group of independent, self-governing States.

The summer of 1468 was a time of unusual splendour, even for the Court of Burgundy. On June 25 Margaret of York, sister to Edward IV, attended by a brilliant company of lords and ladies, sailed into the harbour of Sluis, where she was met by Charles. A week later they journeyed to the ancient town of Damme, where their marriage was celebrated on the morning of July 3. On the same day they entered Bruges in state, followed by sixty ladies of the greatest families of England and Burgundy, and surrounded by princes and nobles who wore the Order of the Golden Fleece. The famous tournament of the Tree of Gold was held, after the marriage-feast, in the market-place; and the revels were continued for eight days longer.

All was bright and gay in Flanders; but far away among the Ardennes dark clouds were gathering over the Valley of the Meuse. To explain this we must go back for a few years.

Though the House of Burgundy held sway over Flanders, Brabant, Hainaut, Namur, and Luxembourg, the Principality of Liége was governed by its bishops; and all along the Valley of the Meuse the Burgundians had been hated ever since, early in the century, they had helped the reigning Bishop, John of Bavaria, to crush a rising caused by his tyranny. After some years another Bishop, Jean de Heinsberg, was forced by threats to resign in favour of Louis de Bourbon, Philip

[1] "Charles le Téméraire était despote, par tempérament et par système. Aussi le programme paternel à l'égard des provinces et des communes ne lui suffit-il plus" (Van Kalken, p. 192).

of Burgundy's nephew.[1] The Chapter of St. Lambert, by whom the Bishops had always been appointed, complained; but the appointment was confirmed by the Pope, and the whole spiritual and civil administration of the Principality passed into the hands of Philip's kinsman.

This had been a triumph for the House of Burgundy, which had long aimed at extending its influence to the Principality of Liége; but in a few years the clergy, the nobility, and the people united against the Duke's nephew, and combined to drive him from the management of their affairs. In order to protect themselves against Philip, who was likely to interfere on behalf of his nephew, they appointed as Regent Mark of Baden, brother-in-law of the Emperor Frederick III, who came to Liége with some German troops.

The prospect of a war, which might compel the Duke of Burgundy to withdraw part of his army from France, was hailed with joy by Louis XI. He promised help, in men and money, to the people of Liége; and they forthwith assembled in arms. A force of Burgundians, sent by Philip, easily defeated the raw army of Liége, which, deserted by the Germans, was cut to pieces on the field of Montenac in the autumn of 1465. Louis XI, instead of coming to the help of the Liégeois, advised them to make peace with Philip before he sent his redoubtable son, the Comte de Charolais, against them; and a convention was signed under which the Duke of Burgundy became Regent of the Principality.

Peace was proclaimed; but the people of Dinant were so foolhardy as to declare war against Namur. Charles came from France, besieged Dinant, rejected an offer to surrender, and took the town, which he sacked and set on fire. The Hôtel de Ville was blown up. The Cathedral was laid in ruins. A number of prisoners were burned alive. Eight hundred inhabitants, tied in pairs, were thrown into the Meuse and drowned. Every house was demolished; and Charles boasted that travellers passing up the Valley of the Meuse would ask where it was that Dinant had once stood.

Two years had passed since the sack of Dinant, and Philip the Good had died, when the marriage of Charles the Bold was celebrated. In the meantime, a few months after his father's death, Charles had heard of a revolt against Bishop Louis de Bourbon, who escaped to Burgundian Namur. This had been the excuse for inflicting a singular humiliation on the Liégeois.

[1] Then a youth of eighteen, studying at the University of Louvain, where his uncle had sent him to be educated.

Charles marched into the Principality, defeated the forces of Liége in a battle which cost them 7,000 men, and rode into the town, bringing the Bishop with him. The people met him as penitents, with their heads bare, and torches in their hands. He dismounted at the Bishop's Palace, where, after a few days, he pronounced sentence on the town and Principality. The seat of the Bishopric was removed from Liége. In future the ecclesiastical courts were to sit at Maastricht, Louvain, or Namur. No taxes were to be levied on produce carried up or down the Meuse without leave from the Duke of Brabant and the Counts of Hainaut and Namur. The people of the Principality were forbidden to take arms against Burgundy, or make alliances without the Duke's permission. The walls and gates of Liége, and of all other towns in the Principality, were to be destroyed, and the manufacture of arms was forbidden. The Perron, a column in the market-place, which the citizens held in peculiar veneration as a symbol of their liberties, was to be dismantled.

This sentence was rigorously executed. Many of the popular faction fled to France; others took refuge in the Ardennes; some were executed. The Perron was sent to Bruges, and engraved with an inscription full of insults to the people of Liége; the walls were thrown down, and many families went into exile.

In September 1468, when Burgundy and France were on the verge of war, these exiles made their way to Liége. The Bishop fled. But he now wished to live in harmony with his subjects; and when they went in search of him and brought him back it seemed as if there was to be a complete reconciliation. It was at this moment, however, that negotiations for peace between France and Burgundy having been opened, Louis XI went to the headquarters of the Burgundian army at Péronne, where Charles discovered that he had been treacherously inciting the Liégeois to revolt, and imprisoned him in the castle.[1]

After the King had been released, on condition that he would go to Liége with the Burgundian army, no time was

[1] This is, of course, the episode described in *Quentin Durward*. It took place about October 8, 1468. As Sir Walter Scott explained (Note L), Louis de Bourbon was not murdered till 1482. The account of the murder in the novel has no resemblance to what actually took place. The Bishop was killed in the open air, on the right bank of the Meuse, by a follower of William de la Marck, head of the ancient House of Arenberg. This "Wild Boar of the Ardennes" was so called because of his fierce character and appearance, and because there was a wild boar in his coat-of-arms; but he was one of the handsomest men of his time.

lost. On October 30 Louis of France and Charles of Burgundy rode together into Liége at the head of a large army. The inhabitants, men, women, and children, were slaughtered without mercy in the streets, or thrown, tied together, into the Meuse. All the buildings were pillaged and set on fire, except the churches and the houses of the clergy ; Liége was completely destroyed, levelled to the ground ; and Charles did not leave the Principality till he had laid it waste. Even in that age of savage cruelties the cruelties inflicted by the Burgundians on Liége excited universal horror.

To Charles of Burgundy, contests with the burghers of Ghent and Bruges, or campaigns against Liége, were mere battles of the crows and kites. It was comparatively easy to compel the Low Countries to obey him ; but it was a harder task to carry out those plans of conquest by which, had they attained success, the map of Western Europe would have been entirely altered. If to the Low Countries Alsace, Lorraine, Franche Comté, the Upper and the Lower Burgundies, Switzerland, Provence, and the North of Italy had been united, so as to form one dominion extending from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, there would have been a Middle Kingdom, a reconstituted "Lotharingia," a buffer state separating Germany from France, and the whole course of history down to the present day might have been very different from what it has been. But his ambitions were too vast. The story of his conquests, of his triumphs and his failures, has been told a hundred times. On January 7, 1477, two days after the fight at Nancy, in which the Burgundian army had been defeated, a young page, Jean Baptiste Colonna, son of a noble Roman family, was guiding a party who were searching for the body of Charles the Bold to where he had seen him fall during the battle. Not far from the town, near the Chapel of St. Jean de l'Âtre, they found a heap of dead men lying naked among snow and ice and frozen blood in the bed of a small stream. One of the searchers, a poor washerwoman who had served in the Duke's household, saw a ring which she recognised on the finger of one of the corpses, and exclaimed, "Ah ! Mon Prince ! " When they raised the head from the ice to which it was frozen the skin of one cheek peeled off. Wolves or dogs had been gnawing the other. A stroke from some battle-axe had split the head down to the chin. But when the blood had been washed from the disfigured face it was known, beyond doubt, for the face of Charles, Duke of Burgundy. They buried him before the altar of St. Sebastian in the Church of St. George at Nancy, where

the body of the great warrior lay till, in the reign of Charles V, it was carried into Flanders and laid beside the tomb of his daughter Mary in the choir of Notre Dame at Bruges.

"In the fifteenth century," says M. Hanotaux, "there was no country more civilised than the vast dominion which was then called 'The Burgundies.' This Empire, whose glory is but little known, and whose history will one day explain that of Europe, formed as it were a powerful buffer State between France and Germany. But it had its causes of internal weakness, the chief being its too elongated form and the want of convenient access to the sea. However that may be, the existence of this intervening Power was compromised by the imprudent acts of Charles the Bold; and when he died his daughter, Mary of Burgundy, lived long enough to open the serious problem from which Europe is still suffering by her discussions with Louis XI and her marriage with Maximilian of Austria. Louis XV rightly said, when he visited the tomb of Mary of Burgundy at Bruges, 'There is the cradle of our wars.' This other Poland was partitioned. Germany and France have been disputing over its fragments for four centuries."

Mary of Burgundy was beset by troubles from the moment of her father's death. Louis XI, at last victorious in his long and bloody struggle against Charles the Bold, immediately added the Duchy of Burgundy to his French dominions, seized Péronne and other towns on the Somme which Charles had occupied, and attacked Franche Comté. Well aware that the Burgundian system had, however their wealth might have increased, weakened the political condition of the Low Countries, formerly the seat of so many sturdy, independent States, till they now lay almost at his mercy, he laid plans for taking possession of Flanders, Hainaut, and Namur. To oppose these designs the Duchess Mary, an inexperienced girl of only nineteen years, had neither arms, money, nor allies.[1] Her father's army had been destroyed. He had spent the treasure amassed by Philip and had wasted the resources of the Low Countries on his wars. The astute diplomacy of Louis XI during the War of the Roses had led Edward IV to abandon the alliance between the Houses of York and Burgundy some years before the battle of Nancy. She therefore stood alone; and at this crisis in the fortunes of the House of Burgundy each town and province of the Low Countries resolved to recover that power of independent self-government of which it

[1] She was the daughter of Charles the Bold's first wife, Isabella of Bourbon.

had been deprived by Philip and his son. Ghent took the lead; and on February 11, 1477, within little more than a month after the death of Charles, the Duchess Mary signed the document, known as the "Great Privilege," which swept away the centralised system of government and restored to the provinces, towns, and trades their ancient rights and customs.

It was provided that the States-General were to meet when they themselves thought fit. War could not be proclaimed, nor could the Duchess marry, without their consent. French was no longer to be the only official language. The Central Court, or Council of Malines, was abolished The Sovereign was to swear fidelity to these and other provisions of this Charter; and resistance was declared to be lawful if the oath was violated. There was to be a General Council, a "Grand Conseil," or, in Flemish, "Groote Raed," composed of deputies from all the Burgundian domains; but that the Great Privilege was meant to abolish, as far as possible, the central government, and replace it by the regionalism of former days, is shown by the steps taken by the chief towns to secure the return of the state of things which had existed before the Burgundian days, and by the penalties inflicted on magistrates who had been active supporters of the changes introduced by Philip and Charles.[1]

Unhappily the Duchess Mary, in the hope of escaping from the difficulties which surrounded her, made the mistake of authorising a secret negotiation with Louis XI, who proposed that she should promise to marry his son, the Dauphin, who was then only seven years old. Though some of the Flemings approved of this project, it was so violently opposed that when the negotiators whom she had sent to France returned they were put to death by the burghers of Ghent, in spite of her tears and entreaties that their lives should be spared. On this Louis threw aside all pretence of friendship and invaded the Netherlands. He succeeded in taking Valenciennes, Arras, and

[1] "Œuvre d'hommes inexpérimentés et pressés par le temps, le Grand Privilège manque de précision et ne détermine pas suffisamment les attributions de chaque organisme qu'il crée. Mais son caractère d'ensemble, le retour au régionalisme médiéval, est encore souligné par une charte spéciale que se donna la Flandre, ce même 11 février. Par cet acte, les Trois Membres (Gand, Bruges, Ypres) restauraient leurs privilèges économiques, leurs étapes, leurs pouvoirs politiques et industriels sur le plat pays; les métiers en revenaient au protectionnisme et aux règlements prohibitionnistes du XIVe Siècle. Presque au même moment, les Corporations de Bruges, Ypres, Anvers, Bruxelles, Mons, renversaient les échevins dynastiques appartenant aux lignages et envoyaient à l'échafaud les magistrats les plus impopulaires" (Van Kalken, p. 201).

St. Omer; but the Flemings resisted him so stoutly that he confined his operations to laying waste Hainaut. Every day, however, made it plainer that the Duchess ought to have a husband to protect her; and the Communes advised her to choose the Archduke Maximilian of Austria, son and heir of the Emperor Frederick III. She gladly consented; and the marriage was celebrated on August 18, 1477.

A battle won by Maximilian near St. Omer in the summer of 1479 was a serious reverse to Louis XI; and it seemed as if the Duchess Mary might henceforth lead a happier life. But she was thrown from her horse when hunting near Bruges, and died there in March 1482. She left two young children, Philip and Margaret. Maximilian was their legal guardian; but the States of Flanders refused to let him take charge of his son, whom they kept under their control at Ghent. Nor would they acknowledge him as Regent of the Low Countries. By the Peace of Arras, which they concluded with Louis XI in December 1482, the Duchy of Burgundy was ceded to France; and Margaret, daughter of Maximilian and the Duchess Mary, promised in marriage to the Dauphin, was to receive Artois and Franche-Comté as her dowry, and be educated at the French Court.

A struggle between Maximilian and the Flemings followed. It lasted for several years, during which Maximilian carried on hostilities against Charles VIII, who succeeded to the throne of France on the death of his father in 1483, while the people of the Low Countries, split into factions, were plunged into civil war. The French did little to help the Flemings in their resistance to the Archduke. Ghent and Bruges, forced to surrender, recognised him as the guardian of his son, whom he removed from Ghent to Malines. In the spring of 1488 Maximilian, having rashly entered Bruges with only a small guard, was taken prisoner and confined in the Cranenburg, a mansion which is still on the west side of the Market-place, above which the famous belfry towers. After some months he was released, having promised that the Great Privilege, which he had set aside, would be restored, and that he would no longer claim the Regency of Flanders, which was to be governed in his son's name from Ghent. He broke all his promises, and, supported by Malines, Antwerp, Hainaut, Namur, and Luxembourg, renewed his warfare against Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres, among whose allies were Liége, Brussels, and Louvain. There was similar discord in the Northern Netherlands, where the Bishop of Utrecht was on Maximilian's side; and the province

of Holland, "liberty-loving Holland," showed no sympathy with Flanders.

In the end the Archduke triumphed. The great cities of Flanders and Brabant, the last defenders of that mediæval particularism to which they clung so long, were forced to relinquish their peculiar privileges, and accept, at least in name, the centralised system against which they had been struggling. Charles VIII declined to carry out the marriage, arranged when he was Dauphin, with Margaret the daughter of Maximilian, to whom Artois and Franche-Comté were restored by the Treaty of Senlis in May 1493. A few months later Frederick III died, and Maximilian was elected Emperor.[1]

On his son Philip, called "le beau," who had by this time reached his seventeenth year, now devolved the administration of the Low Countries. In 1496 he married Juana, daughter of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile. In the same year his sister Margaret, whose betrothal to Charles VIII was at an end, married Don Juan, son of Ferdinand and Isabella and heir presumptive to their European kingdoms, as well as those rich possessions in the New World which Christopher Columbus had lately discovered. But on the sudden death of Don Juan next year Juana came next in the succession; and this revealed a dazzling prospect of power and glory for Philip or his descendants. He died in 1506, leaving a son who, born at Ghent and educated under the care of his aunt, Margaret of Austria, and of Margaret of York, Charles the Bold's widow, was afterwards Charles V, German Emperor, King of Spain, and heir of Burgundy in the Low Countries.

Charles V extended his frontier on the north-east till at last, in 1543, he became over-lord of all the seventeen provinces which constituted the Netherlands—Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Zutphen, Groningen, Friesland, Over-Yssel, Gelderland, Limburg, Antwerp, Malines, Brabant, Flanders, Namur, Hainaut, Artois, and Luxembourg. The Principality of Liége remained an independent State within the Westphalian circle of the Empire, and was ruled by Bishops elected by the Chapter of Liége.

The wealth of half the world was pouring into the Netherlands through the estuary of the Schelde. Neither Amsterdam

[1] "Uniting in his person those wide domains through Germany which had been dispersed among the collateral branches of his house, and claiming by his marriage with Mary of Burgundy most of the territories of Charles the Bold, he was a Prince greater than any who had sat on the Teutonic throne since the death of Frederick the Second" (Bryce, *Holy Roman Empire*, p. 312, Ed. of 1895).

nor Rotterdam were as yet famous seaports; and Bruges was no longer the Venice of the North. The waterway of the Zwijn, which had connected the city with the sea, became so shallow that trade dwindled away, and finally disappeared before the middle of the sixteenth century. Internal discord and wars with Ghent and other places had destroyed the business of the merchants who once bargained in the stately Cloth Hall of Ypres, on the building of which one hundred years had been spent. Ghent, the most turbulent of the Flemish towns, was not so flourishing as at an earlier period; and most of the commerce which had made Bruges, Ghent, and Ypres, the three *Bonnes Villes* of Flanders, so rich, was absorbed by Antwerp, where merchants from England, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and all parts of the world had established themselves in a city which was now rolling in opulence such as even Venice had scarcely known.

The capital of the Netherlands was Brussels. The Counts of Louvain, on becoming Dukes of Brabant, had built a castle on the site where the Palais du Roi now stands; and there on October 25, 1555, Charles V announced his abdication. The title of Emperor and the Austrian dominions of the Habsburgs were given to his brother Ferdinand. His son Philip, lately married to Queen Mary of England, received the Spanish dominions and the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands.

Side by side with the remarkable industrial progress of the Netherlands there had been from time immemorial endless wars of province against province, town against town, and family against family, till the Diet of Worms put an end to private war in 1495. The seventeen provinces were, in fact, nothing but a collection of separate communities, crowded together in the same small corner of Europe, but, though territorially close together, and slowly yielding to a central authority after the coming of the House of Burgundy, living each a separate life. They were, moreover, inhabited by two races, and different languages were spoken. Flemish and Dutch were used to the north of an irregular line running from near Dunkirk to near Maastricht. The Walloon or French-speaking districts lay between this line and France. But though each province and town stood for itself alone, there was one characteristic common to them all. Though jealous of each other and seldom at peace, they were passionately attached to their local independence and their individual liberties, which were embodied in charters granted by their rulers from time to time. The most famous, and one of the

most liberal, of these local constitutions was the Joyeuse Entrée, or Blyde Incompste, of Brabant, so called because it was hailed with such joy at the entrance of a new Duke by whom it was granted in 1356.[1] It was the attacks of Charles V and his son Philip on these cherished privileges, and the fact that the Imperial foreign policy was carried on entirely in the interests of Spain, which roused such opposition, especially amongst the nobility, that the whole people of the Netherlands united against these monarchs.

The political revolt was merged in that war of religions, led by William the Silent, the history of which everyone has read in the works of Motley. Dissensions arose between Catholics and Calvinists. William the Silent attempted to reconcile them by the Pacification of Ghent. But in the first week of January 1579 the Catholic League of Arras was formed ; and on this the seven Northern Provinces, Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Gelderland, Over-Yssel, and Groningen, together with Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp, Ypres, and other southern towns, joined in a separate league, known as the "Union of Utrecht," for the defence of their liberties. This led to the separation of the Northern from the Southern Netherlands. The Walloons first returned to their allegiance to Philip. The diplomacy of Parma was more fatal to the cause of freedom than the fires of Alva ; and in the course of a few years Flanders and all the southern provinces submitted, and were thereafter known as the Catholic or Spanish Netherlands.[2]

Thirty years of war followed the Union of Utrecht, during which the people of the south fought under the Spaniards against the North. In the summer of 1585 Antwerp, where the Reformation had many disciples, surrendered to Parma. The flower of the population left, carrying with them to Zeeland and Holland what remained of their wealth and, a greater loss, their skill and habits of industry. The Schelde was blockaded

[1] The Joyeuse Entrée was not a constitution drawn up at one time, but a declaration of rights which gradually developed. Its latest form will be found in Poullet, *Histoire de la Joyeuse Entrée de Brabant*, pp. 339–350.

[2] In the middle of the sixteenth century the frontier of the Netherlands extended along the coast from the mouth of the Ems north of the Zuyder Zee to a point on the shore between Dunkirk and Calais. Thence, passing inland towards the Somme, it crossed the Meuse south of Marienbourg, and continued to the Moselle, where it turned to the north and went on, crossing the Rhine till it again reached the Ems. The province of Artois, in which were Arras, Lille, and other important places, now belonging to France, was at that time included in the Netherlands, together with the whole of Luxembourg and Gelderland, and also those territories between the Rhine and the Meuse, such as St. Vith, Eupen, and Malmédy, which were acquired by Prussia during the eighteenth century and at the Congress of Vienna.

by the Dutch; the commerce of Antwerp was ruined; and soon the famous cities of Flanders and Brabant became, in the words of Motley, "mere dens of thieves and beggars."

Some thirteen years after the fall of Antwerp Philip offered to cede the Netherlands to his daughter, the Infanta Isabella, on condition that she married the Archduke Albert of Austria. After his death, in September 1598, this offer was confirmed by Philip III; and the wedding was celebrated in April 1599. Albert and Isabella were popular, though they lived as strangers among their subjects. But, though the Netherlands had been ceded to them, they were not really independent rulers. There was little more than an administrative separation from Spain. They had formally bound themselves to carry out whatever commands came from the Court of Madrid. They were forbidden to trade with the Indies. If they had no children Spain was to resume the government. Spanish troops held the towns; and they were to carry on the war against the Dutch, which continued till 1609, when a truce for twelve years was arranged. The Archduke Albert died in 1621. As there were no children the entire sovereignty went back to Spain; but Isabella was Regent till her death in 1633.

In 1648 came the Peace of Westphalia and the Treaty of Münster. The independence of the Dutch Republic was recognised. The Dutch obtained North Brabant, the Flemish lands on the left bank of the Schelde below Antwerp, afterwards known as Zeeland Flanders, and Maastricht with part of Limburg. The doom of Antwerp was pronounced by an Article declaring the right of the Dutch to keep the Schelde closed.

In the times of Philip II the people of the Spanish Netherlands had missed the opportunity of becoming citizens of the free and powerful State which had now won by sheer heroism its high place amongst the nations; and thereafter, amid the conflicts of the Powers, their provinces were laid waste by war after war for many years. Steenkerk and Landen, the carnage beneath the ramparts of Namur, and the storm of shot and shell which the army of Louis XIV poured into Brussels, destroying churches, convents, and houses, and leaving half the city in ashes, were amongst the horrors of the seventeenth century. In 1697, two years after the bombardment of Brussels, the Treaty of Ryswick put an end for a short time to French aggressions. Ypres and Nieuport were given back to Spain; but the whole of Artois, and the parts of Hainaut and Flanders in which were Valenciennes, Cambrai, Lille, St. Omer, and Dunkirk were finally annexed to France. Only three years

later came the War of the Spanish Succession, with the bloody battles of Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet, fought by the Grand Alliance led by England, the Dutch Republic, and the Empire in order to defeat the will of Charles II of Spain, who had left all his possessions, including the Netherlands, to Philip Duke of Anjou, grandson of Louis XIV. By the Treaties of Utrecht and Rastatt, which terminated this war in 1713–14, the Spanish Netherlands were transferred to the Emperor Charles VI, head of the House of Habsburg, and were called the " Austrian Netherlands " for the next hundred years.

By the Treaty of Münster the Dutch had secured a valuable strategic frontier from Maastricht to the mouth of the Schelde. Ever since the Treaty of Ryswick it had been their policy to use the Southern Netherlands as a bulwark against France. This had given rise to the Barrier System, which England invariably supported ; and by the Barrier Treaties it was provided that Dutch troops were to garrison Ypres, Menin, Namur, and other places. At the same time, in order to favour Amsterdam and the ports of the United Provinces at the expense of Antwerp, the closure of the Schelde was rigorously maintained. After a few years the Emperor formed a Company at Ostend to trade with the Indies. The Republic, England, and other maritime Powers, jealous of any rival trading on the seas, refused to recognise the Pragmatic Sanction by which the Emperor, who had no male issue, settled his dominions on his daughter the Archduchess Maria Theresa, unless this scheme was abandoned. The Emperor had to yield ; the Company was dissolved ; and the *coup de grâce* was given to the trade of Flanders and the other provinces.

Charles VI died in 1740, and was succeeded by his daughter.

During the War of the Austrian Succession, caused by Frederick the Great's breach of faith in attacking Silesia though Prussia was bound by treaty to assist in maintaining the Pragmatic Sanction, France fought against Austria. The Austrian Netherlands were conquered by the French, and occupied till 1748, when they went back to the Habsburgs under the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. A long term of peace followed ; for in the Seven Years War Austria and France were allies, and the Southern Netherlands were therefore left undisturbed. Peace brought some return of prosperity. The population increased ; new industries arose ; agriculture improved ; and the people were contented.

The Empress never came to Brussels ; but she was represented by her brother-in-law, Prince Charles of Lorraine, in

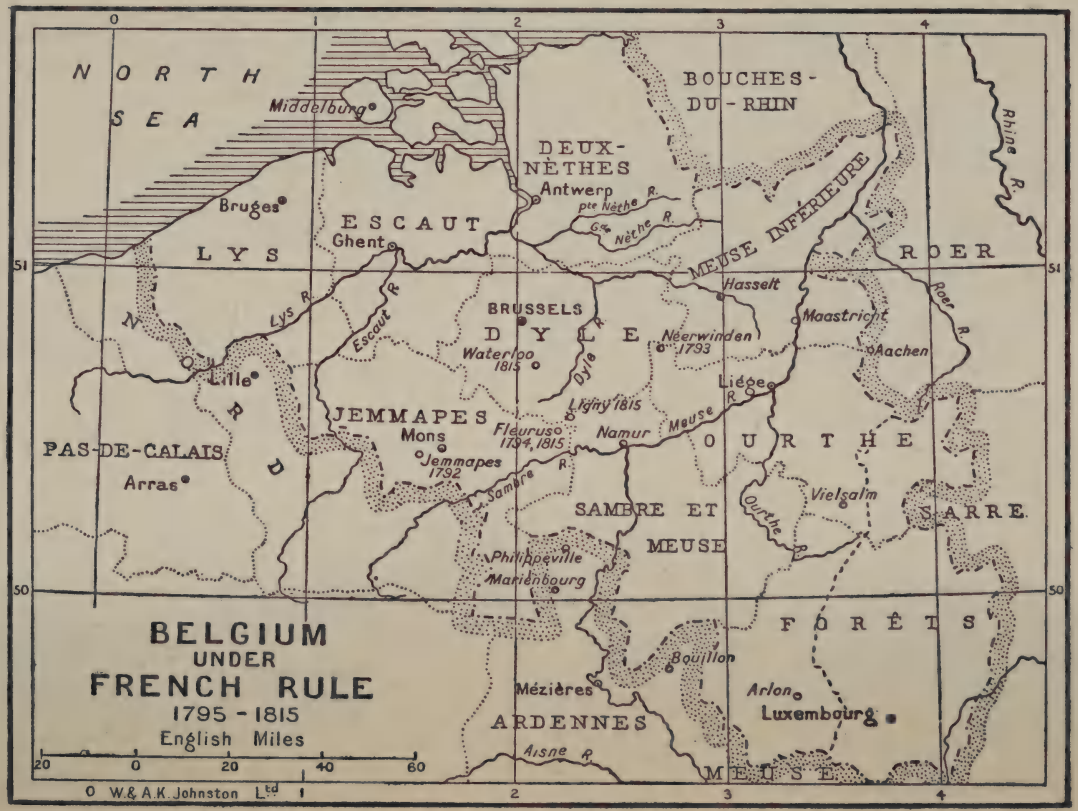
whose times the country was peaceful and happy. Commerce and agriculture flourished, and learning was encouraged. Nor could any governor have been better suited to the pleasure-loving people of Brabant. The annals of his time are full of feasting, dancing and revelry, the accounts of which enable us, perhaps better than graver histories do, to understand the Court of the Austrian Netherlands during the long reign of Maria Theresa. He died in July 1780, and was buried in the vault of Albert and Isabella in the church of Ste. Gudule at Brussels. In November of the same year the Empress died at Vienna. That remarkable man her son Joseph II visited the Netherlands soon after his accession, and demanded Maastricht and the opening of the Schelde. The Dutch invoked the Treaty of Münster and the Barrier Treaty, sent a squadron to blockade the river, and called on England and France to mediate. France consented ; and by the Treaty of Fontainebleau, in November 1785, the Emperor gave up his claim to Maastricht and the freedom of the Schelde. This failure to set free the trade of Antwerp was a bad beginning ; and soon the clergy and many of the laity were estranged by his zeal for reforms in Church and State. A somewhat inglorious episode, the " Revolution of Brabant," was the result.

The people of the Southern Netherlands did not constitute a nation in the habitual and well-understood sense of that word ; but at this point in their history a sentiment of nationality, the seeds of which had been sown in the Burgundian days, can be discerned. The Flemings resented the subordinate position which their language had occupied for many long years. But French, though a majority of the people neither spoke nor understood it, was the language of officials and the upper classes ; and " Belgique " was now commonly used to describe the whole of the country inhabited by the two distinct races, Flemings and Walloons, of whom the population of the Austrian Netherlands was composed. In works published down to the eighteenth century Dutch and Belgian often mean the same thing. The Republic of the United Provinces, for instance, is called " Respublica Belgica." In the eighteenth century, however, the Southern Netherlands are more and more frequently called Belgium, and the Northern Netherlands Holland, after the maritime province which had taken with Zeeland the lead in the revolt against Spain ; and when the rising against Joseph II was at its height, after the Austrians had met with a reverse, and some of the rebels went so far as to declare themselves independent, a Congress of the " United States of

Belgium" was summoned. But the end soon came. The Emperor died in February 1790, and was succeeded by his brother Leopold II, who sent fresh troops into Brabant. The insurgents, who were divided into two bitterly hostile factions, gave way. The ancient privileges, the infringement of which had caused the revolt, were restored; and the cry of independence died away amidst the thunders of the French Revolution.

The Revolution had many partisans in the Netherlands, especially at Liége, where there was a strong wish for incorporation with France, and where the magistrates celebrated the event by wantonly destroying their magnificent Cathedral of St. Lambert. In other districts opinion was divided; but nothing could long withstand the army of the French Republic. Between 1792 and 1794 the tide of war ebbed and flowed until at last the Austrian and English forces were driven out of Belgium and Holland. In October 1795 the Convention at Paris annexed the whole of the Austrian Netherlands, the Principality of Liége, Zeeland Flanders, Venloo, Maastricht, and part of Limburg. The old boundaries were obliterated, and the provinces were cut up into departments. Two years later, in October 1797, Austria ceded her Belgian provinces to France by the Treaty of Campo Formio. The effect of this transaction was that they were held by the French under a title as valid by international law as the title under which the Habsburgs had held them since the Treaty of Utrecht.

For nearly twenty years the Belgian provinces formed part of France. Under the Convention and the Directory their lot was hard. Abolition of old rights and privileges, exorbitant taxation, confiscation of public and private property, the suppression of Catholic worship, and above all the conscription, were some of many grievances complained of. The decree of the Convention opening the Schelde in November 1792 did not mend the broken fortunes of Antwerp; and there was no revival of trade till Napoleon began to construct his naval base, the "pistol pointed at the heart of England." During the Consulate and the Empire, however, great reforms were introduced. The Concordat pacified the clergy. The finances were put on a sound footing. The Code Napoléon improved the administration of justice. Important public works, such as the construction of roads and canals, were beneficial to the country. Apart from the conscription the Belgians had little cause to regret their latest change of rulers; and in course of time the Walloons, if not the Flemings, might have become as thoroughly attached to France as the people of Artois had become


NORTH SEA
Middelburg
Bruges
LYS
ESCAUT
Ghent
DEUX-NÈTHES
Antwerp
pte Nèthe R.
Gde Nèthe R.
BOUCHES-DU-RHIN
Rhine R.
MEUSE INFÉRIEURE
ROER
Roer R.
Hasselt
Maastricht
Aachen
BRUSSELS
DYLE
Waterloo 1815
Néerwinden 1793
Dyle
Escaut R.
Lys R.
Lille
NORD
Liége
Meuse R.
Ligny 1815
JEMMAPES
Mons
Fleurus 1794, 1815
Namur
Jemmapes 1792
Sambre R.
PAS-DE-CALAIS
Arras
OURTHE
Ourthe R.
Vielsalm
SAMBRE ET MEUSE
SARRE
Philippeville
Marienbourg
FORÊTS
Bouillon
Mézières
Arlon
Luxembourg
ARDENNES
Aisne R.
METSE
BELGIUM
UNDER
FRENCH RULE
1795 - 1815
English Miles
20 0 20 40 60
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0 1 2 3 4
51
50

since their separation from the rest of Flanders. But in the winter of 1813, after the battle of Leipzig, the hosts of the Coalition entered, and swept on towards France, till soon the whole of Belgium was in the hands of the Allies.

If any man in the streets of London had been asked, in that winter of 1813–14, what brought about the conflict which Great Britain had carried on for more than twenty years, he would perhaps have replied that it was the execution of Louis XVI and the excesses of the French Revolution. He might possibly have said that we had been fighting to restore the Bourbons. But, though these were common ideas at that time, the fundamental causes of the long war were the invasion of the Austrian Netherlands by the French, their violation of the Treaties respecting the Schelde, and their attack on Holland. Yet within less than three years from the beginning of the war the Austrian Netherlands had been annexed by France, Holland had been conquered, and with the disastrous retreat of our army in the winter of 1794–95, it seemed as if the object for which Great Britain fought must be abandoned. And, by a strange fatality, as the general war went on, though the fleets of France were destroyed and all her colonies taken, though the glories of Minden were revived at Maida, and though at last Wellington in the Peninsula gained one great victory after another from Vimeiro to the Pyrenees, all our efforts in the Netherlands were failures. The seat of war there had been for centuries the chosen battle-ground of England as of all the European States. It would have been difficult to find a causeway on which some British army had not marched, a canal along which British soldiers had not been towed, a river which they had not crossed, or a meadow on which their horses had not browsed. There was scarcely a town in the Belgian provinces which they had not entered. In the valley of the Meuse from Liége to Namur, and on the plain of Flanders, they had fought in numberless compaigns. Ramillies, Oudenarde, Malplaquet were once as familiar names in every British village as Mons, Ypres and the Somme are to-day. But from February 1793, when the Convention at Paris flung down the gauntlet, till that morning in March 1814 when at Bergen-op-Zoom 2,000 British troops surrendered to the garrison of a fortress which they had taken by assault a few hours before, none of our expeditions to the Netherlands succeeded. The combined British and Russian armies which went to Holland at the time of the second Coalition were forced to evacuate the country after a short campaign of two months. At the time of the

third Coalition the perfidy of Prussia prevented the march of a British army through Hanover into Holland and on to Belgium, and broke the heart of Pitt. Even when the strongest force which had ever left the shores of England was sent to the Schelde in 1809 it was destroyed by fever in the marshes of South Beveland and Walcheren. This disaster was followed by Napoleon's annexation of Holland; and then it seemed as if both Belgium and Holland were to be permanently absorbed in the French Empire. But throughout the whole war, though during some of the fruitless negotiations for peace, and when a Treaty was actually concluded at Amiens, the military strength of France was so overwhelming that the British Ministers acquiesced in her predominance on the Continent, they never relinquished the hope of recovering Belgium and Holland.[1] No matter what victories the British Navy might win; no matter what territories might be acquired in the East; whether we were "filching sugar islands" or seizing important colonies; fighting alone, or with Allies on whom subsidies were lavished by the million; at every stage of the gigantic struggle there was always in the background this question of the Netherlands. And when the negotiations of 1814 came the British Ministers adhered with remarkable tenacity to one demand. The map of Europe might be altered beyond the Alps and the Rhine in accordance with the wishes of the other Powers. Most of the colonies we had taken might be given back. But there was to be no compromise on the vital point that, as Grenville had insisted just before the war began, France must not be left, "either directly or indirectly, Sovereign of the Low Countries and general arbitress of the rights and liberties of Europe."

Thiers, in a few sentences, pregnant with suggestions of what would have happened if Germany had won the last war, explains the value of the Belgian provinces to France. "That acquisition," he says, "gave her the mouths of the rivers most important to the commerce of the North, the Schelde, the Meuse, and the Rhine. It gave her a considerable increase of coast, and consequently of shipping. It gave her seaports of high importance, especially Antwerp. It gave her, lastly, a prolongation of our maritime frontier in a quarter most dangerous to the English frontier, opposite to the defenceless coasts of Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, and Yorkshire. Besides this positive acquisition, the Netherlands (Belgium) gave us another advan-

[1] The rupture of the Peace of Amiens was chiefly caused, it will be remembered, by Napoleon's refusal to withdraw his troops from Holland.

tage; Holland must fall under the immediate influence of France, when no longer separated from her by Austrian provinces. In this case the French lines would extend not only to Antwerp but to the Texel, and the English coast would be encompassed by a girdle of hostile Powers." [1] He might also have said that on the west three-fourths of the Irish were watching the sea for the coming of the French.

In 1814 the Cabinet of London were resolved to end this danger to the security of Great Britain and to the general peace of Europe. The Allies held the Belgian provinces by right of conquest; and their policy was to form a solid Barrier State by uniting them to the Northern Netherlands from which they had been separated at the close of the sixteenth century, and thus to erect a bulwark against French aggressions.

When the French invaded and conquered Holland in the winter of 1794–95, William V of Orange, Stadtholder of the Dutch Republic, fled to England with his family. He died at Brunswick in 1806. His son, who was living in London when the news of Leipzig arrived, was at once recalled by the Dutch, who had risen and expelled the French officials. Long before he left England negotiations as to the future of the Netherlands had begun; and at the end of December 1813 Castlereagh, then Foreign Minister, followed him to the Continent and concluded, in March 1814, the Treaty of Chaumont, which provided that Holland was to receive an increase of territory, and to be placed under the sovereignty of the House of Orange. After the abdication of Napoleon the Treaty of Paris, of May 30, 1814, and the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna in the following year, completed this arrangement by settling that the Belgian provinces, with the Principality of Liége, were to be united to Holland, except Luxembourg, which was erected into a Grand Duchy of the Germanic Confederation, and given to the Prince of Orange personally as compensation for his Nassau-Orange Principalities in Germany, which were ceded to Prussia. At the same time Prussia received Malmédy, Eupen, and other Walloon cantons lying to the east of Luxembourg and Liége. In July 1814 the Prince went to Brussels as Governor for the Allies till the general reconstruction of Europe was finished; but when Napoleon returned from Elba in the spring of 1815 he assumed the royal authority, and was proclaimed King of the Netherlands and Grand Duke of Luxembourg.

[1] Thiers, *History of the French Revolution* (English edition of 1895), i. 503.

The reunion of Holland and Belgium by the Congress of Vienna has often been condemned; but it is difficult to see what wiser settlement could have been found at that time. The Belgians, indeed, sent deputies to Chaumont to request that they might be again placed under the sovereignty of the Habsburgs. But the Emperor Francis told them plainly that he could not, in justice to them or to himself, undertake the defence of provinces so distant from the mass of his dominions. The deputies then proposed the creation of a separate State under his brother, the Archduke Charles of Austria. At one time the British Cabinet had been ready to favour this arrangement if the Court of Vienna approved.[1] At Chaumont, however, the Allies were unanimous in opposing it. They were convinced that if Belgium were left to stand alone the aggressive policy of France would sooner or later be revived; and the precarious character of Belgian independence during the reign of Napoleon III proves that they were right. The Belgian deputies could not but see the dangers to which a small, weak State would be exposed. "They begin to understand," Castlereagh wrote, "that to be free they must be strong, and that to be strong they must be incorporated in a large system."[2] Incorporation with either Prussia or Holland was the only alternative. In 1805 Pitt had proposed that, if Napoleon was defeated, a barrier against France should be formed by putting Prussia in control of the greater part of Belgium; and Castlereagh was inclined at one time to think well of this plan. But the Hohenzollerns were acquiring such great accessions of territory that if their dominions were extended from the Rhine to the North Sea the balance of power, on which the peace of Europe depended, would be completely upset; and the British proposal was that the House of Orange should rule in Belgium, and also in the districts lying between the Meuse and the Rhine north of a line drawn from Maastricht to Cologne. Prussia, however, demanded all the territory between the Rhine and the Meuse. To this Castlereagh would not agree; and, though he failed to obtain the frontier he desired for the "Kingdom of the Netherlands," he prevented Prussia extending her boundaries to the Meuse. But she acquired, in addition to the Rhenish provinces, Malmédy and other Walloon cantons which had formed part of the Austrian

[1] Memorandum of Cabinet, December 26, 1813. *F.O. Treaty Papers, Continent*, i.

[2] To Lord Clancarty, British Minister at The Hague, March 14, 1814. *F.O. Treaty Papers*, 92-3.

Netherlands ; and by the erection of Luxembourg into a State of the Germanic Confederation, with the Prince of Orange as Grand Duke, her position was further strengthened in the west. On these terms the reunion of the Netherlands was made. "There is but one opinion," Castlereagh wrote to Clancarty, "that to make either Holland or Belgium capable of sustaining a real independence upon the confines of France they must form one State."

But this settlement held good for only fifteen years. Two of the conditions on which the Prince of Orange received the crown of the reunited Netherlands were that the union must be an incorporating union, a complete fusion of the North and South, and that he must govern under a Constitution giving civil and religious liberty to all his subjects. An eminently tolerant and liberal Constitution was compiled ; but nothing was more noticeable in this fundamental law than the extensive prerogatives which it bestowed upon the Sovereign. There were Ministers and a Council of State ; but there was no provision that the Ministers were to be responsible for the executive acts of the King. If the doctrine of Ministerial responsibility, so well understood in Great Britain, had formed part of the Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the course of events might have been different. But it is doubtful whether any Protestant ruler could have overcome the repugnance of the Catholic Church to she tolerant principles of the Constitution. Before it came into force the Belgian Bishops protested against it, spoke of their "surprise and grief," and declared that religion and the liberties of the Church could not exist under it. They issued a manifesto which said that the announcement of liberty, protection, and equal favour to all religions had "spread consternation in our souls" ; and with the antagonism of the clergy began those contentions between King William and his Belgian subjects which ultimately broke up the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

At first, however, in spite of the difficulties caused by the attitude of the Church, it seemed as if the plan of reconstituting the Netherlands of Charles V would succeed. The King meant well, worked hard, and encouraged the commerce and industries of Belgium, so that the country was as prosperous as any part of Europe during the disturbed years which followed the close of the war. But that complete fusion of the North and South which the Powers had hoped to see never took place. The Dutch, who had won their independence in the

seventeenth century, looked down upon the Belgians, who had never been citizens of an independent State ; and the Belgians soon found that, though far more numerous than the Dutch, they were not to have an equal share in the Government. Most of the Ministers, officers in the army and diplomats, were Dutch. This really implied Dutch supremacy, which was resented ; and as time went on other causes of friction arose, such, for instance, as the imposition of certain taxes upon food which bore more heavily on the Belgians than on the Dutch. Another grievance was an ordinance making Dutch the only official language in Flanders and the districts of Brussels and Louvain. Flemish being so akin to Dutch, there was some reason for this measure. But the upper classes, many of the bourgeoisie, officers in the army, officials, and a great number of those who had grown up under the Napoleonic régime, habitually spoke French, and, though many of them knew Flemish, could neither speak nor understand Dutch. Civil servants, moreover, were exasperated by finding that unless they could speak and write Dutch they lost their employments, and their places were given to Hollanders. As the public discontent increased the Belgian press violently attacked the Government ; and a series of State prosecutions, prominent among which was the trial of one Louis de Potter, who was condemned and sent to prison on a charge of sedition, led to a coalition between two parties, the Catholics and the Liberals, who had hitherto been sharply divided.

Van Maanen, Minister of Justice, was held responsible for the State prosecutions ; and there was a demand for his dismissal. The King, who was becoming more and more autocratic, would not yield. In January 1830 he deprived five Belgian deputies of offices and pensions because they had voted against the Government. After this things went rapidly from bad to worse ; and, though as yet there was no movement for separation from Holland, the Diplomatic Corps in the Netherlands became alarmed at the growing discord between King William and the people of the South.

Ever since 1815 the Belgian provinces had been watched by those Frenchmen who had never been reconciled to the settlement of that year ; and in 1829 Prince Jules de Polignac drew up his plans for the reconstruction of Europe, the chief feature of which, so far as they concerned France, was the acquisition of Belgium. French agents were sent to Brussels to foment a revolt ; and preparations had been made for a movement of troops towards the frontier, when suddenly the Revolution of

KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
BELGIUM AND HOLLAND UNITED
1815 - 1830
English Miles
20 0 20 40 60
NORTH SEA
ZUIDER ZEE
FRIESLAND
Leeuwarden
GRONINGEN
Groningen
Assen
DRENTHE
Zwolle
OVERYSSEL
Harlem
AMSTERDAM
Yssel R.
The Hague
UTRECHT
Utrecht
GELDERLAND
Arnhem
Rotterdam
Gouda
's Hertogenbosch
Rhine R.
Bredao
NORTH BRABANT
Middelburg
L'Ecluse
Ostende
Terneuzen
Antwerp
ANTWERP
Bruges
EAST FLANDERS
Ghent
Lierre
Boom
Malines
Meuse R.
LIMBURG
WEST FLANDERS
Ypres
Scheldt R.
BRUSSELS
Vilvorde
Louvain
Hasselt
Maastricht
Cologne
BRABANT
Waterloo 1815
Aachen
Tournai
Antoing
Liége
Meuse R.
Verviers
HAINAUT
Mons
Condé
Namur
Meuse R.
LIEGE
Charleroi
Malmedy
NAMUR
Couvin
Vonêche
GERMANY
FRANCE
LUXEMBOURG
Arlon
Luxembourg
Moselle R.
Trèves
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July 1830 drove Polignac from power, and forced Charles X to escape from Paris to England.

This event gave the signal for that explosion at Brussels which laid the Barrier State set up by the Congress of Vienna in ruins; and from these ruins did the Kingdom of Belgium arise.

CHAPTER I

THE REVOLT OF THE BELGIAN PROVINCES

For some years Brussels had been the favourite meeting-place of political refugees from every land. Carbonari from Italy, Polish exiles, Russians, Germans, Spaniards, irreconcilable Bonapartists, Jacobins, all found shelter there. The French Government had asked the King of the Netherlands to expel some of these adventurers, who had formed a Revolutionary Committee and published books and pamphlets which were prohibited in other parts of Europe. But the King gave out that the Netherlands were "the classic soil of liberty," refused to interfere, and allowed the capital of Belgium to become not only the refuge of genuine patriots who had fled from persecution to their own homelands, but also the haunt of many undesirable characters, needy outcasts, the *mauvais sujets* of various nationalities, ready for any enterprise, however desperate.

The news of the Revolution at Paris spread like wildfire among these aliens, and they eagerly assisted the Frenchmen who were coming daily to Brussels in the work of inciting the native population to rise against the Government. At first, despite these instigations to rebellion, Brussels remained outwardly calm. But one of the recent measures of the Government, the removal of the Supreme Court to The Hague, though most of the appeals were from Belgian tribunals, was giving great dissatisfaction, which increased when it became known that the King intended to appoint Van Maanen as President. There were loud complaints about this new grievance; and every evening on the pavements and in the cafés people were reading the French papers and talking about doing what had been done at Paris.

Louis de Potter had lately been prosecuted for the second time, and sentenced to banishment with some of his associates. On hearing of the July Revolution they went to Paris, in the hope that French troops would be sent into Belgium to assist a Revolution there; and in the first week of August Alexandre

Gendebien, who had been one of the counsel for the defence at the recent trial, and was in favour of reunion with France, wrote to Paris asking if the French still desired to obtain the Rhine frontier. He went so far as to guarantee complete success if the Belgian provinces, the natural highway to the Rhine, were invaded; but he was privately informed by an agent of the French Government that it was most unlikely that Louis Philippe would move unless the Prussians came to the assistance of the King of the Netherlands in the event of a rising in Belgium. About the same time, on August 15, some members of the Opposition, among whom were Gendebien and Sylvain Van de Weyer, afterwards the popular Minister at the Court of St. James's, met in secret. Van de Weyer and Gendebien thought that a revolt was imminent, and that the chiefs of the Opposition should at once make preparations for leading it. The majority, however, had been so impressed by the personal popularity of the Royal Family during a recent visit to Brussels that they pressed for delay; and the meeting was adjourned for a month. But events moved faster than they expected.

The King's birthday was on August 24. It was to be celebrated with unusual brilliancy, The park was to be illuminated, and there were to be fireworks at the Porte de Namur. The people of Brabant had always rejoiced in such displays; but now it was seen that they were not in the humour to be amused by fêtes. Placards were found posted on the walls with the ominous words, "Fireworks on the 23rd. Illuminations on the 24th. Revolution on the 25th." Warnings reached the Procureur du Roi that trouble was brewing; and the festivities were abandoned on the pretext that bad weather was expected. The truth was that the Director of Police could not answer for the peace of the city if a large crowd assembled.

Two years before the *Muette de Portici* of Auber had been produced in Paris with immense effect. It was to be performed, for the first time at Brussels, in the Théâtre de la Monnaie on the evening of August 25; and the authorities were afraid that the plot of the opera, with its story of how Masaniello, the fisherman of Amalfi, led the revolt of Naples against the Spanish Governor, might excite the audience, and lead to a disturbance. These fears were increased by the aspect of the city during the day. Bands of workmen in blouses, some with tricolour ribbons on their hats, were strolling through the streets. Strangers, well dressed and with full purses, went about inviting all who would to enter the taverns and drink with them. Beer and wine flowed like water; and it was

noticed that these generous foreigners had much to say about French sympathy for the Belgians, the glory of France, and the power of the French people to assist their neighbours. The taverns did a roaring trade; and when evening came there was so much disorder in the streets that quiet citizens became alarmed, and remained at home.

When the theatre opened a letter by Gendebien, published in one of the newspapers, was sold at the doors as the people were entering. The Belgians, he said, did not wish to be a colony of Holland. They claimed that equality with the inhabitants of Amsterdam and The Hague which they had enjoyed when they were French citizens, and were convinced that if again united to France they would be admitted to full partnership with the French. This letter, with its allusions to France as the best friend of Belgium, was read aloud in the theatre before the curtain rose. Orders had been given that if there was any attempt to sing the "Marseillaise" the police, some of whom in plain clothes were posted in the theatre, were to stop it at once. But every song of Revolution was cheered, and the spectators became wildly excited.

Outside, in the Place de la Monnaie, a large crowd had gathered; and it was reported to the Director of Police that persons of good appearance, said to be Frenchmen, were making speeches in the cafés, while others went about fraternising with the mob and distributing money. Suddenly there was a rush from the theatre. The opera had been received with unbounded applause. The wrongs of Masaniello's sister, the dumb girl Fenella, the strong situations, the hymns of freedom, roused the emotions of the audience; and the climax came with the duet in the fourth act, when the tenor, Adolphe Nourrit, sang the words:

> "Amour sacré de la Patrie
> Rends-nous l'audace et la fierté."

Almost every man in the theatre rose and rushed out. Rioting, plundering, disorder of every kind began. The gunsmiths' shops were broken open; arms were stolen; and the mob, many of whom were young boys, resisted every attempt of the police and military commanders, who seem to have lost their heads, to restore order. Van Maanen's house was in the Square of the Petit Salon, through which the wide Rue de la Régence, well known by every visitor to Brussels, leads up from the Place Royale to the huge pile of the Palais de Justice. Opposite the Minister's house was the prison in which Louis de

Potter and other members of the Opposition had been confined. Fortunately for himself Van Maanen, who was regarded as the evil genius of the King, was not at home. But the door was wrenched open, the furniture was thrown out and broken to pieces, and the house was set on fire and burned to the ground. There were similar scenes in other parts of the city; and it was rumoured that the rioters were on their way to attack and destroy the Royal Palace and the Palace of the Hereditary Prince of Orange, the large building which stands in a garden overlooking the park, and is now the "Palais des Académies." But these outrages were prevented by the arrival of a few troops from Malines.[1]

All night Brussels was in the hands of the mob. Next morning it was found that some of the rioters and a few soldiers had been killed; and one of the papers, the *Courrier des Pays-Bas*, published an article deploring what had taken place. "We beg," it said, "all those who have any influence with the labouring population to interfere promptly." A proclamation was issued from the Hôtel de Ville promising, though without any authority, the dismissal of Van Maanen and the introduction of Ministerial responsibility. But this promise was of no avail; the black, yellow, and red banner of Brabant was raised; the royal arms were torn down; and the mob no longer shouted "Vive la France," but "Vive la Belgique," declaring that barricades would be erected, and the forces of the Crown resisted if they tried to enter the city.

Alarmed by these treasonable threats, some of the leading citizens met in the Hôtel de Ville, and drew up an address to the King. The general discontent could, they said, be concealed no longer; and they implored His Majesty, in whose goodness and justice they had confidence, to remove the grievances complained of. This address, in which nothing was said about a separation from Holland, was entrusted to deputies who started for The Hague on August 29.

Van Maanen had already offered his resignation; but it was not accepted. Most of the Ministers were against any concessions. There must, they said, be no thought of yielding till the malcontents were crushed. The Hereditary Prince of

[1] A very full account of this riot is given in a Report sent to The Hague by the Director of Police at Brussels. It is among the Dutch Archives: *Van Maanen Papers*, No. 167. The writer took a copy of it some years ago; but it is far too long for quotation. Some of the incidents are in an article of his in the *Morning Post* of April 19, 1913. Juste and other Belgian historians describe what took place at considerable length, as it was the starting-point of the revolt.

Orange, on the contrary, advised his father to allow Van Maanen to retire, and if there were to be concessions to grant them at once. He implored the King to try the effect of conciliation before using force. But it was decided to send an army into Belgium commanded by Prince Frederick, the King's second son; and the two Princes started at once, reaching Vilvorde, six miles from Brussels, late in the evening of August 30, with about 9,000 troops and 20 guns.

The deputation from Brussels had an audience of the King, and stated the complaints of his Belgian subjects. But nothing they said could alter his resolution to suppress the revolt by force of arms. The deputies, however, made the only practical suggestion for a settlement of the Belgian question which was put forward at that time. This was that there should be an administrative separation of Belgium from Holland. Their proposal was that the Orange dynasty should be maintained, but that Belgium should have self-government with the Hereditary Prince as Viceroy. There was as yet no movement for a complete rupture with Holland; and the Hereditary Prince went to Brussels in the hope of securing a peaceful settlement by means of the administrative separation. The leading citizens were in favour of this; and for a short time it seemed as if it might be arranged. But after the departure of the Prince disorder spread. The people of Antwerp and Ghent, most of whom were rich merchants and industrious workmen, had no sympathy with the rising at Brussels. But at Bruges, Louvain, Liége, and elsewhere there was serious rioting. Bands of insurgents, taking the law into their own hands, attacked the soldiers of the King; and on September 23 Prince Frederick marched on Brussels.

The King's troops reached the Park, but could not force their way into the Place Royale, which was defended by a strong barricade. Every house in the Rue Royale was full of marksmen, who fired from the windows upon the troops. In other quarters of the town there was the same stubborn resistance. The Prince did not use his heavy guns, which could have destroyed Brussels; and this was probably the cause of his failure to quell the rising. The struggle lasted for three days. At night both sides ceased fighting. At early morning the tocsin sounded from Ste. Gudule, and the insurgents rushed to the barricades, where they fought under the orders of Juan van Halen, a Spanish soldier of fortune, who had left the service of Joseph Bonaparte to fight against him under Mina, and had come to Brussels as a refugee after 1815. He had no fixed

political opinions; but, with his experience of guerrilla warfare in Spain, he was the very man needed by the coterie of civilians, most of them advocates and journalists, who were nominally at the head of affairs, but who were, though fluent talkers and writers about revolutionary movements and armed resistance, quite useless as leaders when it came to actual fighting. They had sent for Van Halen, who, assisted by Mellinet, formerly an officer of the Imperial Guard, Niellon, who had fought in 1812 and 1813 and had been decorated on the field of battle by Marmont, the Belgian Pierre Rodenbach, who had served in the French army during the Empire, and other old soldiers, took command of a number of trained veterans of Napoleon's armies; and these stood side by side with the working men of Brussels in their blouses, foreign adventurers, and fiery Walloons who had come in haste from Liége.

At daybreak on September 27 all was quiet when a party of the insurgents stole into the Park. They found it empty. The night had been very dark; and in the small hours Prince Frederick had withdrawn his troops, who were now marching away in obedience to orders from The Hague, where it had been supposed that a demonstration in force would immediately put an end to the troubles in Belgium.[1]

The retirement of the Royal army, caused, there can be little doubt, by a desire to avoid further bloodshed [2] and spare Brussels, soon became known over all the Belgian provinces. Wherever there was a garrison the Dutch officers found that the Belgian privates were becoming mutinous. Many deserted, and those who remained loyal were threatened with excommunication by the priests if they did not join the insurgents. Within three weeks the King had lost all the fortresses of the Catholic Netherlands except Antwerp and Maastricht, and a Provisional Government had assumed authority in Brussels.

This Administration was composed of men who had till then taken no great part in public life. De Potter was, indeed, already a conspicuous figure; but even Van de Weyer had then

[1] Prince Frederick himself had not expected any resistance. There is apparently some reason for believing that he had been asked to enter Brussels by some of the Notables. "Le Prince Frédéric," Baron Nothomb asks, "avait-il été invité par un grand nombre des notables de Bruxelles à faire occuper cette ville par son armée? Question grave, que la Maison d'Orange éclairira sans doute un jour, et que l'impartialité historique nous oblige de poser." Nothomb, *Essai Historique et Politique sur la Révolution Belge* (4th Ed. 1876), i. 96. Mr. Cartwright, Secretary to the British Embassy at The Hague, who had been sent to investigate the state of Brussels, was led to believe that there would be no opposition if troops were sent in to restore order.

[2] There were heavy casualties on both sides.

almost no political experience. The crisis, and the absence of Belgian deputies who were attending the States-General at The Hague, had given a few able and ambitious men their chance; and they had taken it. They displayed, nevertheless, much wisdom. Though proclaiming, in defiance of the Great Powers who had established the Kingdom of the Netherlands, that "the Belgian provinces, detached by force from Holland, shall form an independent State," they refused to permit an attack on Dutch territory, which some of their followers were so rash as to propose, and gave notice that a National Congress was to meet, in which representatives of the Belgian people would discuss the future of the country, and frame a new Constitution.

Meanwhile a Commission to draw up a plan of self-government for Belgium had already been appointed at The Hague; and a draft of a measure for that purpose is among the Dutch Archives.[1] But it came too late. Before it was ready the alarming news from Belgium called for prompt action; and the Hereditary Prince was made temporary Governor of those parts of Belgium "where legal authority is still recognised." He went to Antwerp, and announced that the Southern Netherlands were to have an Administration composed entirely of Belgians; that persons engaged in public affairs might in future use what language they pleased; that the question of education would be settled as the Catholic Netherlands wished; and that there would be an amnesty for all political offenders.

Negotiations were opened with the Provisional Government; but the King had asked the Powers to support him, believing that they would not allow the work of the Congress of Vienna to be undone, and had also issued a violent proclamation calling the people of Holland to arms. This ill-timed manifesto, together with the fact that foreign intervention had been called for, convinced the Prince that no real concessions would be granted by his father; and, suddenly resolving to lead the movement for complete independence himself, he announced that he acknowledged the Belgians as independent, and desired to help them in establishing their political nationality. But his offer was rejected by the Provisional Government, who told him that his help was not needed, as they had already obtained their independence, and all authority was in their hands. At the same time he mortally offended his father, who is said to have declared that he would rather see de Potter on the throne of Belgium than his own son. He therefore resigned his com-

[1] "Ontwerp-Grondwet voor een in tweën desplitet Koninkrijk der Verbonden Nederlanden." October 18, 1830: *Van Maanen Papers*, No. 173.

mission as Governor, and bade farewell to the Belgians in a message which spoke of his regret at having failed in his object, "the pacification of your beautiful provinces," and assured them that he would always endeavour to promote their welfare.

Two days after the Prince left Antwerp there was an episode which put an end to the last lingering hope of a reconciliation between the House of Orange and the Belgians.

Royal troops, commanded by General Chassé, an old officer who had led a brigade of Netherlanders at Waterloo, where he rendered effective service at the crisis of the battle, had withdrawn into the citadel of Antwerp under pressure by bands of rebels led by Mellinet and Niellon, who forthwith called on the garrison to surrender. In a strong and heavily armed fortress, with a large number of regular soldiers under him, and nine ships of war lying in the Schelde, Chassé, of course, refused; but, an armistice having been arranged, a flag of truce was hoisted on the ramparts. This was on October 26. Next day the armistice was violated by a party of Belgians who fired upon some soldiers of the garrison. Chassé at once opened fire; and for some hours the citadel and the ships in the river bombarded the town, which was lighted up after darkness fell by flames roaring from buildings which were set on fire. Late at night Chassé consented to stop the bombardment on condition that his troops were not further molested; and another armistice provided that either side was to give three days' notice before renewing hostilities. Chassé remained in possession of the citadel; but the bombardment was the final blow to King William's rule over the Belgians, who declared that henceforth he and they would be for ever separated by the torrent of fire and blood which had flowed through Antwerp.

CHAPTER II

THE CONFERENCE OF LONDON

The declaration of independence by the Provisional Government at Brussels reopened the old question which the Great Powers had meant to settle once for all when they formed the Kingdom of the Netherlands. When King William called on them to intervene he hoped that those who had placed him on a throne would keep him there, if necessary, by forcibly suppressing the revolt; and when the representatives of Great Britain, France, Russia, Austria, and Prussia met in the Foreign Office at London, on November 4, 1830, it was very doubtful whether an appeal to arms could be avoided. To maintain the general peace, provided France was kept out of Belgium, was the aim of the British Ministers; and now the official policy of France was to act in agreement with Great Britain, and turn a deaf ear to those who still wished to carry out the annexationist plans of Polignac. But much depended on the action of other Powers. Austria was at the head of the Germanic Confederation. "The Belgian affair," Metternich said, "is regarded by our august Master with the utmost abhorrence." He had, however, made up his mind that the union of Holland and Belgium, about which he had long been doubtful, was doomed. All that could be done, he told the Emperor Francis, was to bring the Courts of Europe into such close relations with Holland as would prevent the incorporation of the Belgian provinces with France.

As to Prussia, the family ties between the Hohenzollerns and the House of Orange had lately been made stronger by the marriage of Prince Albrecht, Frederick William of Prussia's youngest son, to the Princess Marianne of the Netherlands, the King's only daughter. This marriage, which was celebrated at The Hague on September 14, when the Belgian provinces were fast breaking out into open rebellion, encouraged King William in his confidence that the Prussian army would come to his assistance.

In Russia the Emperor Nicholas, inveterate enemy of every revolution, was an ardent admirer of the autocratic methods of the Prussian Government. His Foreign Minister, Count Nesselrode, was a German. In diplomacy, in official, social, and commercial life the Russian Empire and Prussia were closely connected; and, even if Austria and other States of the Germanic Confederation remained neutral, Nicholas, who declared that he would never consent to the separation of Belgium from Holland, could depend on having Prussia as an ally if he went to war against the Belgian Revolution. Moreover, the Hereditary Prince of Orange, after his engagement to the Princess Charlotte of Wales was broken off, had married the Grand Duchess Anna Pavlovna of Russia. Thus a family alliance bound the Romanovs to the House of Orange; and Nicholas, with Prussia by his side, would have sent an army into Belgium if the Poles had not risen against him at the end of November. The revolt of Russian Poland tied his hands, restrained Prussia, increased the influence of England, and helped both Palmerston, who became Foreign Minister on the formation of Lord Grey's Government a few days after the Conference met, and Talleyrand, who had come to London as French Ambassador, to find a peaceful solution of the Belgian problem. There were frequent differences of opinion within the Conference; but, under the skilful management of Palmerston, Grey, and Talleyrand, the plenipotentiaries of the five Great Powers conducted their deliberations without coming to an open rupture.

The questions which these diplomats had to settle were so complicated, and their negotiations were so hampered by objections raised against their proposals by the Belgians and the Dutch alike, that nine years passed before the final settlement was reached. Metternich once declared that the Belgian question passed his comprehension. "I can," he wrote, "no longer make anything out of it; my mind refuses to work upon it; and if my duty did not prevent my doing so, I would abandon it to the winds rather than have anything to do with it. It has come to affect me with inexpressible disgust." It is possible, however, to present in a few paragraphs the salient points in the tangled labyrinth of protocols in which the proceedings of the Conference are recorded.[1]

[1] "Papers relating to the Affairs of Belgium laid before Parliament: Protocols of the Conference of London." *Parl. Papers*, 1833, xl. 1. An account of these transactions will be found in the second volume of the *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, chapter iii.

On December 20 the Conference decided that, as the perfect fusion of the Northern and Southern Netherlands had not been obtained, Belgium must be an independent State. A month later terms of separation were set forth in a protocol which provided that the frontier dividing Holland from Belgium was to be the frontier which in 1790, before the French conquest, had divided the Dutch Republic from the Austrian Netherlands—with the exception that King William was to retain his Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

It was obvious that the Belgian provinces would henceforth be, as of old, a small corner of Europe, with no natural boundary except for some forty miles of coastline, almost surrounded by jealous neighbours, and constantly liable to be the scene of wars. Therefore, as a substitute for the measure of security which union with Holland had given, and in the general interests of European peace, perpetual neutrality, under the guarantee of each of the five Powers, was imposed upon the new State. By another protocol Belgium was made liable for about one-half of the public debt of the late United Kingdom.

These terms of separation were agreed to by King William, but rejected by the National Congress, which was now sitting at Brussels. The Belgians claimed Luxembourg, all Limburg with Maastricht, and Zeeland Flanders (the territory on the left bank of the Schelde below Antwerp) which had belonged to the Dutch Republic since the Treaty of Münster in 1648. They objected to the proposed division of the debt, and resented the system of perpetual neutrality as inconsistent with complete independence.

The National Congress had decided that Belgium was to be a Monarchy. Great Britain and the three Northern Powers—France also, but not so cordially—hoped for some time that the Hereditary Prince would be elected King. His cause, however, was abandoned after the Congress had declared the House of Orange to be for ever excluded from all power in Belgium. A number of persons were named as eligible for election; but at last a vote was taken between the Duc de Nemours, Louis Philippe's second son, the Duke of Leuchtenberg, son of Prince Eugène de Beauharnais, and the Archduke Charles of Austria. On February 3, 1831 the Congress elected Nemours.

It was clear that with Nemours as King Belgium would fall completely under French influence, lose all genuine indepen-

dence, and become a mere Protectorate.[1] The British Government therefore resolved to make war rather than allow his accession. The Northern Powers were also hostile; and Louis Philippe declined the throne for his son. Then came the negotiations which led to the choice of Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, to whom an offer of the Belgian Crown was made.

The Prince, who had lived in England since the death of his wife, the Princess Charlotte of Wales, declined to take the Crown unless the Belgian Congress agreed to the terms of separation laid down by the Conference and accepted by the King of the Netherlands. Several weeks were spent in attempts to reach a settlement. The Belgian Congress defied the Conference, and cheered orators who called for war against the Dutch. So closely interwoven were the aspirations of the European peoples in their fight for independence, or for a larger share in the government of their countries, that in England, where the struggle for Parliamentary Reform was raging, some of the Reformers identified their own cause with the cause of the French, the Belgians, and the Poles; and one paper published an article, from its correspondent at Paris, advising the Belgians to stand firm and concede nothing. "The Belgian question is most important. Watch it closely. The battle now fighting in Belgium, as in Poland, is the same battle as was fought in France in July last; and if the Great Powers, or at least Austria, Prussia, and Russia, should succeed in overshadowing the principle of the governments of the people at Brussels and Warsaw, they would soon attack the French Revolution, and the British Reform of Parliament. Let the Belgians take courage. Let them imitate the Poles, and be firm. Let them be prepared to make the same sacrifices of blood and treasure as the Poles have done; and then Luxembourg, Maastricht, Venloo, all Limburg, and the left bank of the Schelde must and will form portions of the new and independent Kingdom of Belgium."[2]

But the Belgian question was at this juncture practically in the cautious hands of Palmerston and Grey, the very last

[1] "Influence, if it be excessive and constant, is veiled conquest," Lord Salisbury said in one of his Essays on Foreign Politics. "The intense anxiety which the Great Powers have displayed to warn each other off such new thrones as those of Greece and Belgium arises from that unquestionable fact. . . . The truth is that in a carefully balanced structure like the European system of nations, each State has a vested right in the complete and real independence of its neighbours."

[2] *Morning Chronicle*, June 3, 1831.

men in the world to agree with irresponsible journalists who called for sacrifices of blood and treasure; and a compromise was found, the leading feature of which was that the crucial questions of Luxembourg, Limburg, and Maastricht were to be left open for negotiation between the King of the Belgians, after his accession, the King of Holland, and the Germanic Confederation. The claim to the left bank of the Schelde was relinquished by the Belgian representatives who were in London.

On June 26 the whole plan was embodied in eighteen articles, and Prince Leopold intimated that he would go to Brussels at once if the Belgian Congress accepted them. They were resisted for a time, even at the risk of war, of the loss of independence, of a partition of the Belgian provinces among the Powers. But in the end a majority of the Congress voted for acceptance; and on July 21, 1831 Leopold entered Brussels and was proclaimed King of the Belgians.

Meanwhile King William had given notice that he would treat Leopold as an enemy if he assumed the sovereignty of Belgium, and that, though ready to negotiate, he would support any negotiation by his military resources. On August 2 the Hereditary Prince crossed the frontier with an army, and in ten days drove the Belgian forces back to Louvain. He was about to march on Brussels when a French army, for which King Leopold had appealed, came upon the scene, and the Dutch went back to Holland.

The result of this short campaign was that the Conference of London imposed on the Belgians fresh and less favourable terms of separation, which were contained in twenty-four articles. Instead of leaving the dispute as to Luxembourg and Limburg for settlement by negotiation, they gave part of Luxembourg to Belgium, and left the remainder (now forming the Grand Duchy) to the King of the Netherlands, who also received, as compensation for the share of Luxembourg assigned to Belgium, Limburg on the right bank of the Meuse, together with a radius of territory on the left bank opposite Maastricht, which was henceforth to be a Dutch town.

The Belgians refused to accept these terms, and kept up their resistance till November 15, 1831, when the famous "Treaty of the Twenty-four Articles" was concluded between Belgium and the Five Great Powers.

King William rejected this arrangement, and continued to hold the citadel of Antwerp. The Belgians, at the same time, declined to evacuate the parts of Luxembourg and Limburg which had been given to the King of the Netherlands, so long

as he did not accept the Twenty-four Articles. Relations between the Powers became strained. Great Britain and France, though their *entente* was several times on the point of breaking down, were usually agreed in supporting Belgium, while Russia, Austria, and Prussia were on the side of Holland. At last, in October 1832, when there was danger of a general war if the Treaty of the Twenty-four Articles was not speedily executed, the British and French Governments decided that the Dutch must be forced to surrender the citadel of Antwerp. The other three Powers would consent to nothing but some form of economic pressure upon Holland. To this Great Britain and France would not agree, on the ground that it would delay, probably for a long time, the execution of a Treaty " the non-fulfilment of which exposes the peace of Europe to constant and increasing peril." The Northern Powers then retired from the Conference ; the ports of Holland were blockaded by British and French squadrons ; the citadel of Antwerp was besieged by the French ; and in a short time Chassé was forced to capitulate.

Though the Belgians now obtained possession of the citadel, Dutch troops still held two forts lower down the Schelde. The Belgians therefore remained in occupation of all Luxembourg and Limburg except the town of Maastricht ; and by a Convention signed at London on May 21, 1833, between Great Britain, France, and Holland, it was provided that the *status quo* as at that date was to be maintained till all questions at issue between Holland and Belgium were settled by a Definitive Treaty. This left Belgium in temporary possession of Luxembourg and Limburg. The Conference, in which the plenipotentiaries of the three Northern Powers again took part, met once more and sat till November 1833, when it was dissolved, partly because the Germanic Confederation and the members of the House of Orange-Nassau had not consented to the partition of the Grand Duchy, and partly because neither Holland nor Belgium could be induced to agree on a number of minor points.

After the Conference had thus failed to reach a final settlement the hostility of Prussia against Belgium increased. In September 1835 M. Van de Weyer, Belgian Minister in London, wrote to Brussels that his Prussian colleague admitted that the policy of the Cabinet of Berlin was to keep Belgium in a state of unrest and weakness.[1] Supported by Austria, Prussia

[1] *La Revue Générale*, February 1920 (an article by the Abbé de Lannoy on " Une rupture diplomatique Germano-Belge au XIXme siècle ").

opposed the erection of fortifications to defend the northern frontier of Belgium against a possible invasion by Holland; and there was a long controversy in which British Ministers took part, Wellington disapproving of the Belgian proposals on the ground that they tended to foster a belief that Belgium was to be always in a state of hostility to Holland, and Palmerston defending them on the ground that, though the Conference had declared Belgium to be permanently neutral, an independent State required something stronger than the parchment of a treaty to make it safe. In the end the Belgians limited their plans to the erection of works for the defence of Diest[1]; and the dispute, which had nearly led to a rupture of diplomatic relations between Prussia and Belgium, was thus settled by what was virtually a compromise.

The Belgian occupation and administration of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg caused a far more dangerous quarrel, though it began over a matter which was apparently trivial.[2] In 1833 and 1834 the Belgian authorities put up to auction the right of cutting down and selling trees in the forest of Grünenwald, part of which lay within the strategic radius surrounding the fortress of Luxembourg, then occupied by troops of the Germanic Confederation. Persons found cutting wood were arrested by the garrison and taken as prisoners into Luxembourg. The Prussian General threatened to post military guards in the forest; and the Commander of the Belgian forces in the Grand Duchy was informed that a complaint had been lodged with the Diet, and that the removal of trees would be prevented by force.

The Belgian Ministers protested against these proceedings as violations of the Convention of May 1833, which, though forbidding them to maintain troops or execute military movements within the strategic radius, left them free to execute all the rights and functions of the civil administration in the Grand Duchy. They appealed to the French and British Governments. The Duc de Broglie and Palmerston both said that in their opinion the Belgian Cabinet were acting within their rights, but gave a broad hint that it would be prudent to avoid a collision with the forces of the Germanic Confederation.

[1] Fifteen miles north-east of Louvain.

[2] "À propos d'une coupe de Bois." For the relations between Belgium and Prussia at this period see *La Belgique et la Prusse en conflit*, 1834–8, by M. de Ridder, Director-General at the Belgian Foreign Office. This work, which appeared in 1919, is written almost entirely from hitherto unpublished documents in the Foreign Office at Brussels.

This hint was taken; and work in the forest of Grünenwald ceased.

In October 1837, however, King William announced that, as Grand Duke of Luxembourg, he intended to take up the work himself, and asked for the support of the Germanic Confederation. When his request came before the Diet at Frankfurt the President, the Austrian Count Münch-Bellinghausen, moved the adjournment of the question till he could receive instructions from Vienna. But the representative of Prussia, General Schöler, insisted on an immediate decision; and the Diet resolved, by a majority of votes, to support the King of the Netherlands, if necessary, by force of arms.[1] The Cabinet of Brussels at once instructed their Ministers in Paris and London to protest against the action of King William and the Diet, and to inform the French and British Governments that, even if no help was given by the guaranteeing Powers, Belgium was resolved to meet force by force, and defend her position in Luxembourg as defined by the Convention of May 1833.

Both Paris and London returned favourable answers. "It comes to this," Palmerston said to Van de Weyer, "that by the Convention the King Grand Duke bound himself not to renew hostilities in Luxembourg; but he cannot interfere with the civil administration except by employing force to change the *status quo*—that is to say by renewing hostilities." He instructed the British Ministers at Berlin, Frankfurt, and The Hague to present Notes to the Governments to which they were accredited, expressing, in firm language, the bad impression made on the British Cabinet by the resolution of the Diet. He also spoke seriously to Baron Dedel, the Dutch Minister in London, and told him that the proceedings of the Grand Duke and the Diet were manifest violations of the Convention, that, if persisted in, they would be taken as a declaration of hostilities against France and Great Britain, and that a general war might follow, the responsibility for which would fall upon the King of the Netherlands.

Baron Dedel tried to show that King William was not responsible for the action of the Diet; but Palmerston replied that he knew perfectly well that everything that had been done was done at the request of the King. "It is a very grave matter," he said. "It exposes the King, your Master, to a heavy responsibility. Tell him at once what has passed at this interview. Tell him that we know how to make him respect the engagements he has signed, and that prudence,

[1] The full text of the Diet's resolution is given in M. de Ridder's work, p. 106.

justice, and the sanctity of Conventions impose on him the duty of suspending without delay the execution of measures he has imprudently instigated."

In the meantime the Belgian Commander in the Grand Duchy received an official warning that the orders of the Diet were to be executed, and that he would be held liable for the consequences if he resisted them. This threat was followed by the arrival of Prussian reinforcements. The Belgian Government thereupon sent more troops into the Grand Duchy, and requested the despatch of French regiments to the frontier. Our Ambassador in Paris intimated that France could rely on the co-operation of Great Britain in defending the rights of Belgium ; and the attitude of Prussia soon became more conciliatory. At the end of January 1838 M. Beaulieu, Belgian *Chargé d'Affaires* at Berlin, was able to inform his Government that the Federal troops in the fortress of Luxembourg had been ordered not to assist the Dutch agents in the forest of Grünenwald, that the *status quo* in the Grand Duchy was to be maintained, and that King William, in a confidential interview with the French Minister at The Hague, had confessed that he had been in the wrong. The Belgian Minister at the same time agreed to withdraw the additional troops which they had sent into Luxembourg.

A conflict over the situation in the Grand Duchy was thus avoided ; but there was still danger of a rupture of relations between Belgium and Prussia. The principal complaint of the Prussian Government against Belgium was, as M. Beaulieu wrote to Brussels on January 24, 1838, the circulation in the Rhenish Provinces of pamphlets printed in Belgium, and sent into the Rhineland to assist the Archbishop of Cologne and his followers in their agitation against the proceedings of the Prussian Government in the religious controversy about the education of children born of marriage between Catholics and Protestants, and against the support given by Prussia to the teaching of free-thought principles by Professor Hermes of Bonn.

If the doctrine of " Self-determination " had been the fashion when the Congress of Vienna was reconstructing Europe, and a plébiscite had been taken among the people of the Rhineland, they would have decided in favour either of retaining their connection with France, union with the Belgian provinces, or the establishment of an independent Rhenish State. Very few votes would have been given for transferring the left bank of the Rhine to the Prussians, who would themselves much

rather have annexed the whole of Saxony if the other Powers had allowed them. In the Rhineland Prussian rule was detested by the Catholics, who formed a large majority of the population. When, therefore, the Government at Berlin tried to put in force the Prussian law by which in mixed marriages the father could choose the religion in which the children were to be educated; when an order came from Rome that the Bishops must direct the Catholic wife to undertake that they would be educated as Catholics; when the Bishops set the Civil Government at defiance; and when the Archbishop of Cologne, in obedience to a Papal Bull, forbade theological students to study at Bonn, where the doctrines of Hermes were accepted, and was put in prison, there was an outburst of resistance which made it seem as if the embers of religious hatred which had been smouldering beneath the surface ever since the Treaty of Münster closed the Thirty Years War might burst into a conflagration. The towns along the left bank of the Rhine, Dumas said, were like a long train of gunpowder which the least spark might set on fire; and the danger to the general peace of Europe was increased by a movement among some of the Belgians which aimed at provoking a revolt against Prussia, and bringing about the union of Belgium, including Luxembourg and Limburg, to the Rhineland.

Suddenly, in March 1838, the King of the Netherlands announced that he accepted the Twenty-four Articles. He was partially reconciled to the partition of his Grand Duchy by the cession to him of the part of Limburg which lay on the right bank of the Meuse; but the King of the Belgians, his subjects, and above all the people of Luxembourg, were indignant when the Great Powers demanded the execution of the Treaty of the Twenty-four Articles. For almost exactly four hundred years Luxembourg had shared the fortunes of the Southern Netherlands.[1] Though in 1814–15 it had become a personal possession of King William and a State of the Germanic Confederation, the Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands applied to it and the Belgian provinces alike. It was represented by four deputies in the States-General, and was treated as an integral part of the Southern or Belgian Netherlands.

[1] In 1441 the Duchess Elizabeth of Luxembourg, widow of Anthony, Duke of Brabant, sold Luxembourg to Philip the Good of Burgundy. After that the Dukedom of Luxembourg formed part of the Burgundian dominions, and was inherited by Charles V from his grandmother Mary of Burgundy, daughter of Charles the Bold. It was a province of the Spanish and of the Austrian Netherlands, and during the French period was included in the "Département des Forêts."

The people of Luxembourg took part in the revolt of 1830. Their deputies sat in the National Congress; and when the Treaty of the Twenty-four Articles was signed in November 1831 they protested against the separation of any part of the province from the rest of Belgium. Since then the whole of Luxembourg had been administered, in accordance with the wishes of the people, as a Belgian province.

The news that the Powers were determined that the Treaty must be executed, and the partitions carried into effect, was received with dismay by the Belgians who, though they had accepted the terms of separation in 1831, had come to believe that they would be left in possession of both Limburg and Luxembourg. To Luxembourg, in particular, they were bound by political union for long years, personal friendships, ties of blood, the intermarriage of families; and even if the people of the portion assigned to the King of the Netherlands as Grand Duke had been willing to sever their connection with the rest of the province, the Belgians would have resented the loss of any territory, however small it might be. But the dry bones of the Holy Alliance were beginning to move; and if the Treaty was not speedily executed it was certain that Prussia, Austria, and the other States of the Germanic Confederation would take the field to enforce it. If Great Britain and France, having signed the Treaty, felt they must be neutral, or if they assisted the Belgians and were defeated, the Kingdom of Belgium would disappear, King Leopold would be an exile in England, the territory between the Meuse and the North Sea would be divided between Prussia and Holland, only to become after a few years the scene of a new war. An offer by Belgium to purchase Luxembourg and Limburg was rejected. The Powers were unanimous. Even Palmerston, the best friend of the Belgians, told them that if they did not yield the British Government would not interfere with any steps taken by Holland or the Germanic Confederation to compel them. The same warning came from France; and, after some painful scenes and wild talk of war in the Chambers at Brussels, they gave way.

On April 19, 1839, the Treaties which finally established the Kingdom of Belgium were signed in London.

There were three Treaties. The first was between the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, the Emperor of Austria, the King of the French, the King of Prussia, and the Russian Emperor, on the one part, and the King of the Netherlands on the other. The King of the Netherlands formally acknow-

ledged that the union between Holland and Belgium was dissolved; and it was declared that the Twenty-four Articles were "placed under the guarantee of their said Majesties," the sovereigns of Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia, and Russia.

By the second Treaty, which was between Holland and Belgium, the Twenty-four Articles became the terms of separation under the guarantee of the five Powers.

By the third Treaty, which was between Belgium and the five Powers, the terms of separation were again placed under the guarantee of the five Powers.

By these Treaties the limits within which Belgium was declared to be a neutral State, under the guarantee of the Powers, were settled as they remained till 1919, the exact frontier-line being, however, afterwards fixed by a Treaty between Holland and Belgium signed at The Hague on November 5, 1842, and a Boundary Convention signed at Maastricht on August 8, 1843.

The interest payable by Belgium on the public debt of the Netherlands was reduced from 8,400,000 florins to 5,000,000; but Holland retained a right to levy tolls on ships using the Schelde which was given her by the Twenty-four Articles. The pilotage and buoying of the river, and the keeping in good order of the channels below Antwerp, were left subject to the joint superintendence of Commissioners appointed by the two countries. Moderate pilotage dues, the same for vessels of all nations, were to be fixed by common agreement.[1]

History shows that new States have seldom been contented with their boundaries; and in 1839, when the boundaries of independent Belgium were at last fixed after nine years of negotiation, the partitions of Luxembourg and Limburg were deeply resented by the Belgians. In consenting to the disruption of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in creating which the British Government of 1815 had taken so prominent a part, Great Britain had risked her own security and also the traditional friendship of the House of Orange. Yet the King of the Belgians wrote to his niece that the feeling was strongest against England. "You say," Queen Victoria replied, "that the anger of the Belgians is principally directed against England. Now, I must say you are very unjust towards us, and (if I could) I might be even a little angry with you, dear Uncle.

[1] The Treaties of 1839 can be conveniently studied in Hertslet's *Map of Europe by Treaty*, ii. 979–1001. The Boundary Treaty and Convention are in the same volume, pp. 1029–33.

We only *pressed* Belgium for her *own* good, and *not* for ours. It may seem hard at first, but the time will come when you will see that we were right in urging you not to delay any longer the signature of the treaty. I think that you will see in this frank expression of my sentiments no wish to annoy or hurt you, but only an anxious desire to prove to you that England is Belgium's sincere friend, and that my Government are ever desirous of doing what is in their power for the welfare, security, and prosperity of yourself and your Kingdom."

King Leopold was not pacified. "We have not been listened to," he wrote, "and arrangements are *forced* upon us, in themselves full of danger, when by consulting the *real interests* of Holland and Belgium, both countries might have been placed on a footing of *sincere peace* and good neighbourhood. This country feels now humbled and *désenchanté* with its *soi-disant* political independence as it pleases the Conference to settle it. They will take a dislike to a political state which *wounds their vanity*, and will, in consequence of this, *not wish it to continue*. Two things will happen, therefore, on the very first opportunity, either that this country will be involved in war to better a position which it thinks *too humiliating*, or that it will voluntarily throw up a nominal independence in which it is now hemmed in between France and Holland, which begins on the North Sea, and ends, of all things in this world, on *the Moselle*! I think old Pirson,[1] who said in the Chamber that if the treaty was carried into execution I was likely to be the first and last King of the country, was not wrong. Whenever this will happen, it will be *very awkward* for England, and *deservedly so*." The young Queen met this somewhat petulant outburst by stating, in a few dignified words, her regret that this was a subject on which they could not agree. "I shall," she said, "limit myself to my expressions of very sincere wishes for the welfare and prosperity of Belgium."

Relations between London and Brussels might have been far from cordial if the Queen and her uncle Leopold had not been on terms of personal affection. The tie which connected the two Courts was made closer by the marriage, in 1840, of the Queen to King Leopold's nephew, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, a match planned by the King and the Dowager Duchess of Coburg when the Queen, then Princess Victoria, was a mere child. The King of the Belgians and his friend

[1] Deputy for Dinant.

Baron Stockmar were the confidential advisers, as is well known, of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. The close intimacy between the Courts continued for many years, and the Belgian Minister in London, M. Sylvain Van de Weyer, was a *persona grata*, not only at Court but also in English society.

CHAPTER III

THE CONSTITUTION

The Kingdom of Belgium is governed under a Constitution which was framed by the Congress at Brussels early in the year 1831, and, in all its essential Articles, still remains in force.

The Belgian of to-day may well be grateful when he reads of the proceedings of the men who gave his country this fundamental law, the most liberal of the written Constitutions. With the example of Paris before their eyes, the two hundred deputies who met at Brussels might have carried on their debates in the midst of scenes like those which led Mallet du Pan to say that whenever his countrymen met to deliberate, the place of meeting became either a bear-garden or a fireship. But though French influences were strong amongst them, there was little violence, and none of that desire to upset all existing institutions which might have led to the construction of an edifice as insecure as those which have been so often raised in France. In the Congress there were men who, forty years before, had been active in the Revolution of Brabant. Some had been members of the Council of Five Hundred under the French Directory, and of the Corps Législatif during the Empire. Others had sat in the States-General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the Congress, though composed of persons belonging to all classes and holding all manner of opinions, performed their task with such success that the Constitution they produced has stood the test of time for all these years.

Many years before, during the theocratic revolt against Joseph II, there was a Republican party in Belgium; but the Opposition in the States-General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands had never attacked the monarchical form of government. Nor, except De Potter and a few of his followers, had any leaders of the rising against the Dutch aimed at setting up a Republic; and De Potter soon lost his influence, and passed out of public life. In the Congress the question was, indeed, debated; but Gendebien, though a Republican in theory, said

he did not believe that a Belgian Republic would last for many months. The opinion of Baron Nothomb was that they had only two alternatives, a Monarchy or reunion to France. "Let us," said one of the deputies from Liége, "place a King upon a national throne. Let us offer him a crown with one hand, and with the other an instrument setting forth the limits of his power and the guarantees of our liberty." When the question came to be decided, of 187 deputies who voted, only 13 were in favour of a Republic.

It having thus been decided that the form of government was to be a Monarchy, the Congress went on to compile the Constitution under which the Monarch was to reign.

The deputies had already in their hands the draft of a Constitution which a Committee appointed by the Provisional Government had drawn up. Starting from the principle that the will of the people was the source of all power, this proposed Constitution had its roots in the distant past, when the charters defining popular rights were granted by different rulers to the separate towns, communes, and provinces of the Low Countries; and now, in the prosaic nineteenth century, when the descendants of the men who, often sword in hand, had secured these privileges for so many independent communities, took up their pens to write a single Constitution for the whole of the Belgian provinces, they resolved to rest satisfied with nothing less than a complete code of free institutions.

The Constitution proposed by the Committee did not satisfy all sections of the Congress. It put the legislative power in the hands of the Sovereign and two Chambers; and it was at once proposed that there should be only one Chamber, in which the Ministers of the Crown were not to sit, while the Royal Veto was to be merely suspensive, and not applied more than once to any measure which had passed the single Chamber by a majority of three-fourths. The question of whether there should be one or two Chambers was put to Lafayette, whose experience of the French Revolution gave weight to his opinion. "You must have two Chambers," he at once replied. "A Monarchy cannot exist with only one. We made this mistake in 1791. Without two Chambers I would not answer for the Belgian Monarchy or the peace of your country."

The opinion of Lafayette, widely circulated in Belgium, had great influence with the general public. But in the Congress the supporters of a single Chamber said they wished to establish a Monarchy different from any other, and that the fact that there were two Chambers in other countries was no reason for having

two in Belgium. Their Monarchy was to be not only constitutional, but truly democratic; and the Second Chamber would be a standing obstacle to progress. The Government, however, and most of the deputies perceived that it would be unwise to risk an experiment which had failed elsewhere; and it was resolved to have a Senate, or Upper House.

As to the composition of the Upper House, the Committee had been divided on the question of whether the Senators should be nominated for life by the Crown, or should sit by hereditary right as in the British House of Lords. Both these plans were rejected by the Congress; and it was decided that the Senate should be chosen by popular election, and that the same voters should elect the members of both Chambers. Any native or naturalised Belgian, twenty-five years old and domiciled in the country, could be elected a member of the first Chamber, or "Chamber of Representatives." It was to be elected for four years; but one half of the members were to seek re-election every two years, in order to keep the Legislature in touch with the country, and give the constituencies an opportunity of expressing their opinion on the conduct of their representatives. The members were to be paid. The Senators, who received no pay, were to be forty years old, and liable for 1,000 florins of annual taxation. They were to sit for eight years, and one half were to seek re-election every four years.[1] There is seldom a dissolution of the whole Belgian Legislature at one time.

Though the Congress decided against a Republic, the deputies adopted many principles of the French National Assembly of 1789; and the democratic spirit which led them to make the Senate elective runs through the whole Constitution. It declares that all citizens are equal in the eye of the law, and equally eligible for civil and military employment. Arbitrary arrest and punishment are forbidden. The press is absolutely free, and no censorship is allowed. Inviolability of the home is secured by an Article which forbids domiciliary visits except under legal warrant. The right to petition the Crown and to hold public meetings is declared. The "right of association" is the subject of one Article.[2] This was opposed by a party who saw in it nothing but a move to strengthen the religious

[1] The Heir-Presumptive to the throne has a seat in the Senate at the age of eighteen, on the ground that he ought to know, from an early age, the customs and forms of the Legislature.

[2] "Les Belges ont le droit d'associer: ce droit ne peut être soumis à aucune mesure préventive" (Article 20).

associations; but it also gave the working-classes power to form industrial combinations in order to obtain better terms for their labour.

Though the executive authority is vested in the Crown, no order given by the Sovereign can be pleaded by a Minister to justify his official action. Thus the doctrine of Ministerial responsibility, the absence of which was so much complained of in the reign of William I, is part of the Belgian Constitution. Another of the former grievances was removed by an Article which allows the use of either French or Flemish in the Chambers and the Law Courts. A Minister can speak in both Chambers, but cannot vote except in that of which he is an elected Member.

The King has an uncontrolled right to veto any measure; but his Ministers can be impeached by the Chamber of Representatives and tried before the Cour de Cassation. He can dissolve both the Chambers. At first, during the debates on the Constitution, some of the Noblesse who had seats in the Congress opposed giving him power to dissolve the Senate. But most of the deputies were impressed by the political situation in Great Britain at that time. They knew that the House of Lords could not be dissolved, however often the Reform Bill might be rejected, and that the only constitutional means by which the Commons, though supported by practically the whole nation, could defeat the Lords, was by a creation of peers. If the Sovereign refused this, the Commons, even with the nation behind them, were powerless, and the only remedy would be a Revolution.

There ought, Baron Nothomb said, to be only one permanent political power, the hereditary Kingship; and if the Senate could not be dissolved it would be master both of the Crown and of the Lower House. Baron de Gerlache, the Catholic leader, who thought the Constitution too democratic, wished to have a second Chamber resembling the British House of Lords. But the right to dissolve the Senate was, in the end, given to the Sovereign.

By far the most striking feature of the Constitution, in view of the Catholic character of Belgium, is the manner in which relations between Church and State were adjusted. The Church no longer insisted on keeping education in its own hands; and the controversy on this subject, which had been very bitter during the union with Holland, was settled on the principle that all citizens, clergy and laity alike, have a right to teach the young without interference by the Government. And

the Belgians went still further in their pursuit of perfect liberty. They put into practice the democratic ideal of a free Church in a free State. There was a complete change of policy among the clergy, who in 1815 had protested against the tolerant principles of the Netherlands Constitution; and religious equality was now defended by those who had so violently opposed it. Here French influence was seen. For a long time the refugees from France had been spreading the theories of Voltaire, Rousseau, and other teachers, whose works were sold in cheap editions at every bookstall in Brussels. Although, however, these writings appealed to many of the laity, they did not at first influence the clergy. But the gospel preached by the Abbé Lamennais diffused a new atmosphere through the Catholic Netherlands. In the autumn of 1830 he founded, in company with Montalembert and Lacordaire, the journal *L'Avenir*, the first number of which was published on October 16, 1830. The writers in *L'Avenir* called for complete liberty of conscience and toleration for all forms of belief. Truth will always prevail, they said. The alliance with the State is inconsistent with Catholicism, and has always been ruinous to the Church, which should rely only on the Christian zeal of the faithful. The Ministers of Him who was born in a manger, lived poor, and died upon a cross, should themselves become poor, go down among the people, and recommence the conquest of the world. The result of a separation of the Church from the State would be perfect freedom, spiritual independence, liberty to educate the young, liberty to form religious associations, and liberty of the press. Have faith in the eternal force of truth, and all will go well. Give us liberty of religion, without distinction or privilege, and, in consequence, the total separation of the Church from the State.[1]

These views were received with enthusiasm by the younger priests. The clergy in performing their spiritual functions must, they declared themselves convinced, be independent of the State, though in civil matters they were ready to obey the laws of the country in which they lived. But the older men found it difficult to discard the traditions of the past, and adopt principles which they had all their lives condemned. Nothing but the extraordinary influence of Lamennais could have reconciled them to the new departure.

In the Congress there was a large majority of Catholics. But they resolved that the Constitution, while retaining all

[1] *L'Avenir*, Nov.–Dec. 1830, *passim*; *Articles de l'Avenir* (Louvain 1830–32). Brit. Mus. f. 22.

that was best in the ancient customs of the Belgian provinces, must be adapted to the most advanced modern ideas; and when setting up a Monarchy under which every subject was to be as free as the subjects of any Republic could be, they had the courage to accept, on the vital question of Church and State, the principle of religious equality carried out to its fullest extent. The Prince de Méan, Archbishop of Malines, welcomed "perfect liberty with all its consequences," and said he claimed no exclusive privileges for the Church. But perfect liberty implies not only freedom to do, but also freedom to abstain from doing; and there is an Article in the Constitution which provides that no one can be compelled to take part in the ceremonies of the Church, or to observe ecclesiastical festivals. All faiths and all forms of worship are allowed. Liberty to express any opinion, unlimited freedom of speech, is declared to be the right of every citizen. The civil power can interfere only for the repression of offences against public order committed in the exercise of these liberties.

The Church was thus so far separated from the State; and the Government of Belgium had no longer any voice in the selection of either Bishops or parish priests. This raised the question of whether the State was under any obligation to support them, which was settled by treating the payment of the clergy as the discharge of a debt due to them as compensation for the endowments which the Church had lost at the time of the French Revolution. An Article of the Constitution provides that the budget of each year shall allot a sum to be divided among the pastors of all denominations.[1] But within two years from the time when the principles of toleration gained this signal victory the dream of Lamennais that the Pope, still in his eyes—for he had not yet broken away from Rome—the infallible judge of truth and fountain of all spiritual and temporal authority, would accept the principle of liberty in all things and for all men as a Catholic dogma, was seen to have come through the ivory gate when Gregory XVI condemned the separation of Church and State, the exercise of private judgment, freedom of the press, and every form of toleration.[2] The Pope afterwards assured the Belgians of his entire confidence in their loyalty to the Holy See; but nothing can alter the fact that the principles he condemned are written broad on every page of the Belgian Constitution.

[1] It is under this Article that an annual stipend is paid to the Protestant British Chaplains in Belgium, and also to the Jews

[2] *Encyclical Mirari Vos*, August 15, 1832.

In the Belgian system of government the relations between the central administration and the local authority in the provinces and communes are of peculiar interest.[1] There is a Governor, who represents the Crown, in each of the nine provinces. He presides over a Provincial Council chosen by the voters who elect the Senate. The executive business of local administration is carried on by a "Permanent Deputation" consisting of members appointed from among their own number by the Council, and holding office for eight years. The Constitution gives the Sovereign power to annul the acts of provincial and communal authorities, if they appear contrary to the general interests of the country; and all provincial and communal decrees may be submitted to the Courts, and cannot be enforced unless they are found to be in accordance with the law.

The Provincial Councils are descended from the Provincial "States" of the Burgundian period, which grew out of the primitive method of government by an assembly of the people in the market-place, when each vassal voted in person. Later, chosen representatives alone voted. In Brabant the name of "Etats" was not used till 1421, when the Nobles, Clergy, and Commons called themselves the States of Brabant. Side by side with the States grew up the Council of Brabant, which was originally a consulting body to assist the Duke in administering the law, but which gradually came to concern itself with the management of local affairs, while the States conducted the public business of the Duchy.

In the larger Communes there are elected Communal Councils, with a Burgomaster and "Échevins," who act as representatives of the Central Government, and among whose functions are the preservation of order, the execution of the laws, and the control of local finances. The Burgomaster is nominated by the Council, but receives his appointment from the King, who can refuse it, though this has seldom happened. His office, like that of the Échevins, has its origin in the ancient practice of the Communes, and is associated with many great events in their history. This system of local self-government, of which these officials are the guardians, is one of the most distinctive features in the public life of Belgium. In each town the Hôtel de Ville is the centre of an independent civic life, to which the people are so warmly attached that the Burgomaster may be described as holding a position of influence almost equal to

[1] There are between 2,000 and 3,000 Communes in Belgium.

that of the Central Government of the Kingdom. His influence has often been found valuable when there was a risk of serious disturbances, as, for instance, during the war of 1914–18, when it was necessary to restrain the civilian population from acts which would have given the enemy an excuse for even graver excesses than those of which they were actually guilty. It will never be forgotten how bravely, and with what wisdom, when the Germans were in occupation of Brussels, the Burgomaster Max upheld the traditions of his venerable office.

CHAPTER IV

PRECARIOUS INDEPENDENCE

After the settlement of 1839 the Belgian provinces had peace for seventy-five years. But during all these years a veritable sword of Damocles was hanging over them. Perpetual neutrality, imposed on the Belgians against their wishes, was "guaranteed" by the five Great Powers, but from the first it was doubtful what this really meant. In January 1831 the Powers had drawn up Articles by which they gave a guarantee of the "integrity and inviolability" of Belgian territory. These Articles were, however, altered; and the Treaties of 1839 merely provided that Belgium was to be "an independent and perpetually neutral State," under the guarantee, indeed, of the Powers, but without any express mention of territorial inviolability. This being so, Leopold I was of opinion that Belgium must depend on herself for defence, and not trust wholly to the Powers; and throughout his reign he tried to make his subjects realise their peril, and understand that if they wished to maintain their independence they must be prepared to defend it. Though the Queen of the Belgians was the daughter of Louis Philippe, it was from France that danger threatened. In 1840 newspapers in Paris, inspired by Thiers, were agitating for a move towards the Rhine and a war to recover the frontiers lost in 1815. In 1848, after the fall of Louis Philippe, bands of French revolutionaries tried to enter Belgium in order to proclaim a Republic. This expedition was a fiasco; but when Napoleon III was in power, first as President and afterwards as Emperor, the fate of Belgium trembled in the balance.

In 1832 the Government of France had stipulated for the repayment by Belgium of certain expenses incurred in sending an army to take Antwerp from the Dutch; and in December 1851 the Belgian Minister at Berlin informed the Government at Brussels that overtures had been made to Prussia and the other two Northern Powers to join France in exacting payment. All the diplomats believed that this claim was put

forward in order to create a situation which would give France a pretext for a breach with Belgium. It was, however, soon made clear that if Belgium was attacked Great Britain would go to war. "Any attempt on Belgium would be a *casus belli* for us; you may depend upon that," the Queen wrote.[1] The Courts of St. Petersburg, Vienna, and Berlin were equally determined to preserve the peace; and that crisis passed over.

At this juncture King Leopold began to plan the fortification of Antwerp, as a place where the Belgian forces might concentrate in case of an invasion, and await the help of friendly Powers. He had always been anxious to strengthen his small army. But here the wisdom and foresight of the King were opposed by the folly and blindness of the people. His schemes for defence were violently resisted, most of all by the Catholic Party, who had immense influence, particularly in Flanders. Years passed before the works at Antwerp were completed; and very little was ever done to improve the Belgian army until it was too late.

In 1856 the Emperor Napoleon spoke to Lord Co ley, British Ambassador at Paris, in a way which implied that he had no aggressive aims, and which certainly showed a desire to be on good terms with Great Britain.[2] But year by year he was suspected, with too good reason, of designs on Belgium. In the summer of 1860 King Leopold was in England. "King Leopold's visit is to last a fortnight," Count Vitzthum, the Saxon Minister in London, wrote on June 7. "May it not then be too late to return to Brussels? His friends find him strikingly aged and weary of governing. Many go so far as to believe that he will rather renounce his Crown than embark on any serious struggle to maintain it. The annexation of Belgium is unquestionably on the *tapis* in Paris." Lord Derby foretold "great things" in Belgium, and shrugged his shoulders when asked what Great Britain would do. Lord Wodehouse,[3] then Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, thought that Great Britain would look on. "If the Belgians were determined to be annexed," he said, "who could prevent it?"[4] King Leopold himself believed that if there was a general war the French Emperor would laugh at the Belgians if they talked about perpetual neutrality, and tell them they must either

[1] Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians. February 3, 1852.
[2] Lord Cowley to Lord Clarendon, December 28, 1856. F.O. France, 1140.
[3] The late Earl of Kimberley, who died in 1902.
[4] Vitzthum, *St. Petersburg and London*, ii. 83.

take sides with France or be treated as enemies, thus anticipating, almost exactly, what the Germans did in 1914.

On December 10, 1865 the first King of the Belgians died. "The last years of his life," Lord Malmesbury says, "were spent in perpetual terror of Louis Napoleon, and he was constantly alarming our Ministers and everybody on the subject."

The death of the old King was soon followed by events which proved that his fears were far from groundless. The episode of the draft Treaty of 1866 is obscure only because it is not certain whether it was Prince Bismarck or the Emperor Napoleon who first proposed that France should annex Belgium. If the information received by Mr. Disraeli and the statements of M. Benedetti were correct, it was Bismarck.[1] But the draft which he put in his pocket, and produced four years later to discredit France, was written by Benedetti on instructions drawn up in Paris ; and when the Emperor found that Bismarck did not move further in the matter he tried to purchase the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg with a very definite purpose. "At Luxembourg," Benedetti said, "we shall be on our way to Brussels."

The "Affair of Luxembourg" was the prelude to the war of 1870.[2] In Belgium both the political parties, Catholics and Liberals alike, had grudged every expenditure on the army ; and when the war broke out King Leopold II, perceiving as clearly as his father the critical situation of the country, requested diplomatic intervention by the British Government. Mr. Gladstone, then Prime Minister, said that a violation of Belgian neutrality "would amount to a total extinction of public right in Europe" ; and on August 9, 1870 a Treaty was concluded which bound Great Britain to act with Prussia against France if French troops entered Belgium. On August 11, by a similar Treaty, Great Britain undertook to join France in opposing a Prussian inroad.

During the war both the belligerents respected the neutrality of Belgium. But Sir Robert Morier, then Chargé d'Affaires at Stuttgart, heard that before the commencement of hostilities Prussia had decided to make the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine one of the conditions of peace, and that plans had been discussed in Berlin for a bargain with France if at the end of the war the neutral Powers tried to prevent the annexation. Prussia was to obtain these provinces in

[1] Buckle, *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, iv. 469 ; Benedetti, *Ma Mission en Prusse*, p. 199.

[2] For the "Affair of Luxembourg" see *infra*, Chapter VII.

exchange for the Walloon provinces of Belgium, which were to be given to France.[1] In December 1870 Prince Bismarck told Mr. Odo Russell that M. Thiers had offered, "through a third party," to make peace and cede Alsace and Lorraine to Prussia in exchange for Belgium, which was to be united to France under King Leopold.[2] In the following year, when the German armies were still in France awaiting payment of the indemnity, there were rumours of an Imperial restoration. This was to be brought about by an agreement with Berlin, under which Alsace and Lorraine were to be restored to Napoleon III, Germany receiving Holland and Belgium as compensation.[3] The fact that such ideas were afloat is evidence that some at least of the Powers were ready to play fast and loose with the Treaties of 1839, and that Belgian independence rested on what was really little firmer than a foundation of sand.

In 1875 it was feared that Prince Bismarck, astonished at the quick revival of the French after the war, and apprehensive of what might follow the increase of their army, intended to crush them before they were ready to attack Germany. The Berlin *Post* asked the ominous question, "Is war in sight?" All Europe was alarmed; the French Government appealed to London and St. Petersburg; and the British Ambassador in Berlin, Lord Ampthill, with Prince Gortchakoff, the Russian Chancellor, saw Bismarck and gave him the warning which, together with Queen Victoria's strong letter to the Emperor William, had the effect of preventing a rupture of the peace.[4]

During this crisis the German military attaché at Brussels pressed the Belgian Government to fortify Liége and Namur in order to defend the line of the Meuse against a French invasion; and Prince Bismarck assured the Cabinet of Brussels that, in the event of war, he would endeavour to strengthen the guarantee of Belgian neutrality by forming a combination against any Power which infringed it. But at the Belgian Legation in Berlin and at the Foreign Office in Brussels it was believed that, if war had broken out, the Germans would have entered Belgium without waiting for a French advance, and that henceforth danger must be looked for in the east rather than in the west.

[1] *Memoirs of Sir Robert Morier*, ii. 279.
[2] Fitzmaurice, *Life of Lord Granville*, ii. 74.
[3] Hanotaux, *Histoire de la France Contemporaine*, i. 400 (2nd Edition).
[4] The Emperor Alexander and Prince Gortchakoff were then on a visit to Berlin.

Hitherto it had been understood that if Belgium were invaded the Government and the army would retire to Antwerp, and hold the fortifications till help came. But a few years after 1875 Emile Banning, the Librarian of the Belgian Foreign Office, drew up a confidential Report showing that the line of the Meuse ought to be defended by fortifying Liége and Namur. He foretold that Germany would take the initiative in the next war and violate the neutrality of Belgium, and that the German armies would march from Cologne upon Liége, occupy Namur in a few days, and cross the frontier into France before the French were ready to meet them. The final struggle, he said, would be fought out in the North of France. If the Germans won they would find in the difference between the Flemings and the Walloons a means of re-establishing their own ascendency in the Belgian provinces. However the war might end, Belgium could never again be a neutral country. These remarkable predictions were made nearly thirty years before 1914.[1]

In the reign of Leopold II, as in the reign of his father, all plans for reforming the army system and strengthening the defences were resisted. Banning's report, however, made such an impression on the King that, in spite of opposition from both Catholic and Liberal leaders, the work of constructing new forts round Liége and Namur, and extending the defences of Antwerp, was begun in 1888 by General Brialmont. He and Banning both thought that the Belgians must prepare to meet a violation of their neutrality by either Germany or France. "Therefore," Brialmont said, "we must shut our two doors, Liége and Namur." This view was shared by the King; but there is good reason for believing that he agreed with Banning in thinking that the German peril was what chiefly threatened Belgium.

Banning foretold that Great Britain would be obliged, in her own interests, to fight on the side of France in the next war. But whether a violation of Belgian neutrality would of itself bring a British army into the field seemed doubtful in 1887. At one time it had always been assumed that Great Britain must intervene by force of arms if Belgium was invaded. "We are unfortunately bound by Treaty and interest

[1] Foucault de Mondion, tutor in the family of the Prince de Caraman-Chimay, Foreign Minister in the Beernaert Cabinet (1884), found this private document in the F.O. archives at Brussels, and was guilty of using it to support a false accusation that King Leopold had made a secret alliance with Germany against France. Banning's Report was compiled between 1881 and 1887, and published officially at Le Havre early in the war: *Considérations sur la Défense de la Meuse*, 1915. A new edition, with a Memoir of Banning, was published in 1918.

to protect Belgium and the Schelde, and *must* do it. Russia, Austria, and Prussia are equally bound with us, and may or may not do it," Lord Malmesbury said in October 1852, when he was Foreign Minister. This was the generally accepted view at that time. During the Luxembourg crisis the Queen suggested that Berlin and Paris should be confidentially informed that a violation of Belgian neutrality would " not pass with impunity." This would have been an intimation of war if the violation took place ; and Lord Stanley, who was then at the Foreign Office, raised a difficulty. " I am ready," he explained, " to go as far as may be necessary in support of Belgium, short of giving an absolute pledge to fight for its independence. Suppose we gave such a pledge, that France and Prussia came to an understanding, Russia and Austria standing aloof, where should we be ? " The neutralisation of the Grand Duchy settled that crisis. In 1870 Mr. Gladstone's statements and the treaties he negotiated with Prussia and France, committing Great Britain to war if Belgium was invaded, show what his opinion was ; and ten years later, during his election campaign in Midlothian, he said that in a war for Belgium, " while the breath is in my body I am ready to engage." [1]

In 1887, however, after the fall of the Gladstone Administration, there were indications of a new departure in certain quarters, when Sir Charles Dilke, writing in the *Fortnightly Review*, asked whether Great Britain would fight for Belgium if her neutrality were violated. A letter signed " Diplomaticus " was published in the *Standard*, in which the writer referred to the Treaties concluded by the Government of 1870, and went on to argue that it would be imprudent of Lord Salisbury to undertake similar engagements if there were another war. " However much England might regret the invasion of Belgian territory by either party to the struggle, she could not take part with France against Germany (even if Germany were to seek to turn the French flank by pouring its armies through the Belgian Ardennes) without utterly vitiating and destroying the main purposes of English policy all over the world. But it will be asked, must not England honour its signature and be faithful to its public pledges ? I reply that the Foreign Minister ought to be equal to the task of meeting this objection without committing England to war. The temporary use of a right of way is something different from a permanent and wrongful possession of territory, and surely England would be

[1] At Edinburgh, March 17, 1880.

easily able to obtain from Prince Bismarck ample and adequate guarantees that at the close of the conflict the territory of Belgium should remain intact as before." [1]

This letter was accompanied by a leading article supporting the arguments of "Diplomaticus"; and a discussion in the press followed. The *Pall Mall* said that Germany might read the *Standard* as an invitation to invade France through Belgium, while France might read it as an admission of an obligation on our part to prevent such a violation of neutral territory, and attempted to show that there was no British guarantee of Belgian neutrality. But in the Treaties of 1839 all the five Powers had given their guarantee; and the discussion turned on the question of whether it was consistent with this Treaty obligation to allow a belligerent an unopposed right of way through Belgium. The *Morning Post* admitted the guarantee, but thought that Great Britain should merely protest if it was violated, provided that a guarantee was given that Belgium was to be independent after the war. The *Spectator* said that, though Great Britain would insist that Belgium must not become a theatre of war, "we shall not bar, as indeed we cannot bar, the traversing of her soil." The *National Review* thought it would be enough if we were satisfied that after the war the independence and neutrality of Belgium would be respected.[2]

Our chronic unpreparedness for war, and the well-known reluctance of Belgian politicians to take adequate steps to defend their country, may explain these views, which Sir Charles Dilke interpreted as showing that Great Britain would not fight for Belgium according to our Treaty obligations, but would throw these obligations to the wind "under some convenient pretext." He was probably right in thinking that British public opinion would be against sending troops to Belgium.[3] At that time, however, the masses of the community did not realise the danger to their own security which would follow a German invasion of Belgium. Nor had they any definite knowledge of their Treaty obligations. But when

[1] *Standard*, February 4, 1887.

[2] The Berlin correspondent of the *Standard* reported that the letter of "Diplomaticus" had caused surprise in Germany, where nobody believed that the neutrality of Belgium would ever be called in question. The Germans, he was told, if they entered Belgium, would not go as invaders, but as protectors. It may be noted, in view of what took place in August 1914, that an official German paper said that Germany might find that military reasons made a violation of Belgian neutrality necessary: *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 4, 1882.

[3] Dilke, *The Present Position of European Politics*, p. 45.

these obligations were made plain, and, still more, when a small State was attacked by a great military Power, public opinion changed; and the British people, except an insignificant minority, scorned every convenient pretext for remaining neutral.

It was said that the writings in the *Standard* represented the opinion of Lord Salisbury. He certainly had doubts about the stability of the Belgian Kingdom, and thought that the natural consequence of the disruption of the Netherlands in 1830 was that Belgium would become a dependency of France. "She has hitherto escaped that fate," he wrote in 1862, "thanks to the skilful guidance of the ablest of European monarchs. But she has ceased to perform the functions for which she was destined in the European system. She has become rather a prey to tempt France than an outpost to repel her." [1] In 1871 he brought the subject of guarantees before the House of Lords. "We see," he said, "that these small Kingdoms which we have guaranteed are marked out by the destinies of the world for destruction," and asked whether anyone could say that Belgium was likely to be long-lived. Giving guarantees he described as "a dangerous game." [2] But he insisted that if they were to remain in force means should be taken to fulfil them; and, though in 1887 his whole policy depended on a good understanding with Germany, which was eminently desirable in view of French intransigence on the Egyptian question, it is impossible to know whether he would have considered it a sufficient fulfilment of our guarantee to Belgium if we consented to a violation of her neutrality on condition that we received a promise that she would be left intact after the war. On full reflection he might have seen (he knew the history of the Hohenzollerns, and had lived through the Schleswig-Holstein crisis) that any such promise given by the Germans would be worthless, and that if they once obtained a footing in Belgium they would not leave without securing political, economic, and perhaps military control so extensive as to be inconsistent with the real independence of that country.

It was fortunate that the question of war on behalf of Belgium had not to be decided at that time; for there was no

[1] *Quarterly Review*, January 1862; *Essays of the late Marquess of Salisbury: Foreign Politics*, p. 28.

[2] This was when moving that the "Collection of Guarantees" published in 1859 be reprinted, with the addition of any contracted since then. *Hansard*, xx, 1360 (March 6, 1871).

" British Expeditionary Force " available for service on the Continent. And so things remained till the ambitions of the Pan-German party, with the perpetual rattling of the Prussian sword by the Emperor, awakened Europe from the dream of peace, and, after Great Britain and France had come to an agreement on the Egyptian and other matters which had been in dispute between them, British Ministers saw, that apart from any question as to the guarantee of Belgian neutrality, they must form plans for military co-operation with France unless they were prepared, despite the " entente cordiale," to stand by inactive while German armies marched through Belgium on their way to Paris.

NOTE

On January 11, 1917 the German Foreign Office, in a Note to the Ministers of the Neutral Powers reminding them that a guarantee of integrity and independence after the war had been offered to Belgium on condition that the German troops were allowed to march through to France unopposed, said: " It is known that in 1887 the Royal British Government was determined not to oppose on those conditions the claiming of a right of way." This is a mere assertion, which was made for propaganda purposes when the Imperial Government saw that the violation of Belgian neutrality had alienated the sympathy of most of the Powers, and that the United States of America were becoming more and more hostile in consequence of the submarine warfare.

It must be remembered that in 1887 the danger of war between Germany and France was very serious; and if Germany had violated Belgian neutrality the British Government would have been in a position of extreme difficulty. As Sir Charles Dilke showed in the articles which he published at that time, Great Britain was almost helpless from a military point of view. From a political point of view it would have been embarrassing to Lord Salisbury if he had been forced to choose between acquiescing in a violation of Belgian neutrality and going to war on the side of France against Germany. For relations between the British and French Governments were extremely bad. So irritated was Lord Salisbury against the Cabinet of Paris that on February 5, the very day after that on which the Letter of Diplomaticus was published, he wrote to Lord Lyons, our Ambassador in Paris, saying that it was " difficult to prevent oneself from wishing for another Franco-German war to put a stop to this incessant vexation " (Lord Newton, *Life of Lord Lyons*, ii. 386). In another letter (of July 1887) he adds, " Can you wonder that there is, in my eyes, a silver lining even to the great black cloud of a Franco-German War? "

Another difficulty of the situation was that the British and French

newspapers were engaged in one of their periodical wars of the pen, and were busy making as much bad blood as possible between the countries. Authors, too, were plunging into the fray. In France Max O'Rell had published *John Bull et son Île*; and an English writer, who called himself "A Brutal Saxon," had retaliated with *John Bull's Neighbour in her True Light*, a book full of insults to France and all things French. Cordial co-operation between Great Britain and France would have been impossible at that time; but that is not a reason for assuming that the British Cabinet would have acquiesced in a violation of Belgian neutrality by Germany.

Moreover, at the very moment when the danger to Belgium was most acute, Lord Salisbury adhered to the understanding with Austria and Italy on the subject of the Levant, and relations between the British and German Governments were at their best. It was, therefore, necessary that the Foreign Minister should not commit himself, but should adopt an attitude of reserve on the Belgian question. It would also have been not only unwise, but inconsistent with the practice of the Foreign Office, to instruct British Ministers on the Continent to inform the Governments to which they were accredited of the policy which was to be adopted in circumstances which had not yet arisen, and might never arise. Assertions in the German press and elsewhere that this was done in 1887 may safely be discredited.

The writer learns from inquiries at the Foreign Office that the statements repeatedly made, to the effect that the British Government warned the Belgians that they must not rely on British help to retain their neutrality, are quite untrue. No instructions of this kind were sent to Lord Vivian, who was then Her Majesty's representative at Brussels, and there is no record in the Foreign Office of Lord Vivian himself having used language of this kind.

On this subject see Fuller, *Bismarck's Diplomacy at its Zenith*, p. 142 (Harvard University Press, 1922). Also Sanger and Norton, *England's Guarantee to Belgium and Luxembourg*, pp. 99–108.

CHAPTER V

PROGRESS

MEANWHILE the young State, however dangerous its international position might be, was flourishing. Even before 1839, while the Conference of London was negotiating, the Belgians, in spite of the disturbance to the tranquillity of Europe caused by their separation from Holland, had begun to show how well-fitted they were for self-government. Distracted though they were by their uncertain future, embarrassed by the open hostility of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, with Great Britain, though friendly, resolved to maintain the general peace at whatever cost to them, and never sure what turn French policy might take, they nevertheless justified their claim to independence. Fifteen years of prosperity had followed the reunion to Holland; but the separation of 1830 plunged Belgium into financial difficulties and a period of commercial depression. The business capacity, however, and habits of hard work common to both Flemings and Walloons averted what might have ended in a complete industrial collapse; and within a few years the progress of the country was practically secured. One of the most striking examples of Belgian enterprise was the construction of the first railway on the continent. It was opened between Brussels and Malines in May 1835.

As time went on there were signs of progress and industrial activity on all sides. In 1816 the King of the Netherlands and John Cockerill, an Englishman, had founded iron-works at Seraing near Liége. After the separation from Holland Cockerill took over the business, which grew rapidly till it became one of the largest in Europe. From Liége up the valley of the Meuse, and through Namur to Hainaut, where the coal-mines lie thick round Mons and Charleroi, the Walloon districts were covered by industrial towns and villages, whose inhabitants, labouring in the collieries, ironworks, and other industries, were adding by their toil to the resources of the country. It was the same throughout all the Belgian provinces. At Ghent,

for example, the capital of East Flanders, the robust character of the burghers, who fought so hard in ancient times to maintain their local liberties, had been transmitted to their descendants, and was now displayed in a spirit of commercial activity, especially in the manufacture of textiles, which vastly increased the wealth of their famous city.

With the introduction of steam-driven machinery all such industries developed so rapidly that the proportion of the working classes employed in them rose between 1846 and 1896 from 7 to 18 per cent., while the proportion employed on agriculture fell from 25 to 19 per cent.[1] Nevertheless, the cultivation of the soil was not neglected. In Flanders it was still the chief industry. The hours were long, often from five in the morning till eight in the evening in summer, and in winter from sunrise till sunset. Wages were low. Married men received less than the equivalent of 1*s.* 6*d.* per day in English money. Bachelors had less than 10*d.* and their food.[2] Living was certainly cheap, and the wants of the people were few; but the life of the field labourer was hard. The State promoted education in agriculture. A Royal Agricultural College was established at Gembloux in Namur. But, Namur being a Walloon province, the lectures were given in French; and it is said that, though more than two-thirds of the agriculturists were Flemings, they never studied there. Agricultural Societies, however, first founded by the Government in 1848, did much to assist farming, to improve the breed of horses and cattle, and to assist the rural population in many ways. These Government Societies were followed, in 1886, by the formation of unofficial associations having the same object; and four years later a "League of Peasants" took in hand the promotion of reforms in the law relating to agriculture, and also the co-operative organisation of the agricultural interest. All these institutions were beneficial; but the naturally unproductive soil of the Flemish plain, whether laid out in large farms, or in the numerous small holdings and market gardens, would never have yielded, as it did in profusion, crops of every kind, but for the ceaseless, patient toil of a wonderfully frugal and hard-working race.

After 1835, when the first line was opened between Brussels and Malines, a network of railways gradually spread over

[1] Rowntree, *Land and Labour: Lessons from Belgium*, p. 69. This work is the best authority for statistics relating to labour conditions in Belgium up to the beginning of the present century.

[2] At least so the writer always heard in Flanders about twenty years ago.

Belgium. They were at first owned by the State. Then private companies were formed. But in a few years the Government bought up most of the private lines, and the work of extension was carried on with such energy that before the end of the nineteenth century no country in Europe had so complete a railway system. State management has, on the whole, been costly ; but though the working expenses have generally exceeded the profits, the industries and agriculture of the country have reaped great advantages from having the means of transporting their productions in all directions easily and at cheap rates. Between 1881 and 1884 the Government introduced the system of light district railways, which now run, as every tourist must have seen, generally along the roads, from village to village, and are constantly used by the country people on their way to market.

The roads were extended. Between 1830 and 1904 they increased threefold in length.[1] Great attention was also paid to the canals, which are almost as numerous and useful in Belgium as in Holland ; and in 1863 a burden on the trade of Antwerp was removed when the Government agreed, though the Belgian mercantile marine was insignificant, to pay a third of the sum required to buy up the tolls which the Dutch had been entitled since 1839 to levy on all ships navigating the Schelde. The result was an immediate expansion of trade. Imports and exports rose enormously in value ; and the number of vessels entering increased till Antwerp became the greatest port on the European Continent, and one of the greatest in the world. At Ostend, which in 1830 was a small town with an inconvenient harbour, new docks were made : and "La Reine des Plages," as it has been called, grew into an important watering-place, where every year thousands of summer visitors walked in crowds on the sea-front, frequented the luxurious hotels, and left their money on the gaming-tables at the Casino. In 1895 the Belgian Chambers passed a law providing for the building of docks and warehouses at Bruges, and for a canal leading to a harbour on the sea-shore. The canal, avoiding the line of the silted-up Zwijn channel, which formerly connected the city with the sea, followed a new course running in a straight line to a point on the coast between Blankenberghe and Heyst, where the harbour of Zeebrugge was constructed. The works were nearly completed in May 1905, when the first ship to enter, an English steamer, sailed up from Zeebrugge to the inner port at Bruges. These are only a few

[1] Rowntree, ib., p. 316.

examples of what was done to advance the prosperity of the Belgian people in the reigns, and often through the personal exertions, of the two Leopolds.

It was during this period of internal development that Leopold II looked beyond the narrow limits of his Kingdom, and embarked on the enterprise which, shortly before his death, raised Belgium to the rank of a Colonial Power. When the Conference of London, between 1830 and 1839, took charge of a fragment of Europe lying on the shores of the North Sea, supervised the creation of a new State there, fixed its frontiers, declared it independent on terms which they imposed, had made the recognition of its first Sovereign depend on their approval, the plenipotentiaries of the five Great Powers little thought that a day would come when a King of the Belgians would be the absolute master of immense territories in Central Africa. Long before his accession, however, King Leopold had addressed the Belgian Senate on the subject of colonial expansion. He was then heir-presumptive to the Crown of a country so industrious that its productions were far in excess of the capacity of the population to consume them ; and his mind was already full of plans for the extension of Belgian commerce to regions far beyond the seas. His projects met with little or no support ; and he had been on the throne for several years before he found an opportunity for carrying them into effect. In 1876, when Stanley was exploring the Congo, he assembled a Conference at Brussels, and the International African Association was formed with the object of suppressing the slave trade and carrying civilisation into Central Africa. When Stanley came back to Europe in January 1878 he was met at Marseilles by commissioners bearing an invitation to enter King Leopold's service, and complete the exploration of the Congo. He accepted this offer, and soon afterwards set out on the famous journey from which he returned in 1882, bringing with him a number of treaties made with native chiefs, by which they transferred large tracts of country to the International Association.

At the Conference on African affairs which met at Berlin in November 1885 these instruments were produced, and the King of the Belgians was entrusted by the Powers with the government of the " Independent Congo State." The " great philanthropic enterprise " was launched. The natives were to be protected and civilised. All nations, M. Beernaert, the Belgian Minister said, were to enjoy absolute freedom of barter, property, commerce, and navigation. The people, the Ameri-

can delegate at Berlin predicted, would learn that the dominion of white men meant peace and freedom. "I pray," said Prince Bismarck, "for the prosperity of the Congo State, and for the fulfilment of the noble aspirations of its illustrious founder." Lord Granville, then British Foreign Minister, had doubts. He feared that service in the new State, "only loosely attached by the personal tie of Kingship to a small and weak European State," might attract adventurers who would find in the interior of a vast and almost unexplored continent an opportunity for indulging "the worst impulses of human nature." For some years, however, all went well, and the development of the Congo was carried out in accordance with the hopes of the Berlin Conference.

But it was one thing to found a State, and another thing to find the money which was required. This had been forgotten by the Berlin Conference. The imposition of customs duties had been forbidden; and the finances of the Congo State were hampered in other ways. The King had to depend entirely on his own resources. Belgian capitalists and politicians were unwilling to help him. The whole of his private fortune was soon swallowed up. He cut down the expenses of his Court to the lowest point. He borrowed in Germany and elsewhere; and, in spite of his remarkable genius for business, he was involved in serious financial difficulties. This was the situation when another Conference met at Brussels to devise means for the final suppression of the slave trade. On this occasion the Powers agreed to the levy of an *ad valorem* duty of 10 per cent. on goods imported into the Congo; and next year the Belgian Cabinet made a convention with the King which brought him some relief from his embarrassments. A loan of 25,000,000 francs was advanced; but this was in exchange for a promise that he would bequeath the Congo to the Belgians, who were, moreover, to have the option of annexing it at the end of ten years.[1]

A campaign, in which Dhanis, Ponthier, and other Belgian officers showed much skill and courage, put an end to the slave trade. Roads and railways were made; steamboats navigated the river; a system of telegraphs was established; and a steady business was carried on with native traders. But the cost of thus opening up the country involved the King in heavy liabilities; and he proceeded to find the means of

[1] Beyens, *La Question Africaine*, p. 36. "La Belgique," Baron Beyens says, "faisait là une affaire d'or. Elle payait d'un prix minime un territoire quatre-vingt fois plus étendu que le sien et d'une valeur impossible à calculer."

meeting them by declaring that all lands belonged to the State, and that it had the sole right to the natural products of the soil. He reserved for himself the exclusive property in a large territory, which became known as the *Fondation de la Couronne*, and granted concessions to Companies, who paid him from substantial fortunes made out of rubber and ivory collected by natives on whom forced labour was imposed.

It is one of the melancholy facts of history that no Colonial Empire has been founded without the infliction, at some period, of injustice and violence on the coloured races. Every English schoolboy has read how in the eighteenth century there was seen in India " the most frightful of all spectacles, the strength of civilisation without its mercy " ; how the servants of the East India Company forced the natives to buy dear and sell cheap ; how vast fortunes were accumulated at Calcutta, " while millions of human beings were reduced to the extremity of wretchedness " ; how in London Clive was hated by " the wealthy and powerful servants of the Company whose rapacity and tyranny he had withstood " ; and how the greatest Englishman who had ever ruled in the East was tried in Westminster Hall on the accusation of having oppressed the Indian people. It was from events such as those described in Macaulay's essays on Clive and Warren Hastings that the British people learnt to watch what was done by their countrymen in the dark places of the earth, and to employ in their Colonial service men specially educated for the work of ruling native races. By a long and painful experience they were taught how to establish a Colonial system which, though still far from perfect, and always requiring careful supervision by the Government, had been conducted for many years before the Congo State was founded, on the principle, not always perhaps carried fully into practice, that the white settler must not sacrifice the native to the acquisition of the wealth which is produced by his labour.

With this difficult problem of Colonial policy, which Great Britain, after so many years of experience, has even now only partially solved, Belgium was suddenly brought face to face.

Neither the Chambers at Brussels nor the Ministers of the Crown were responsible for the affairs of the Congo. But they had authorised the King to undertake the government of this African dominion ; Belgian capital was invested there ; Belgian officers and civilians were employed ; and the National Anthem was played on the quay at Antwerp when ships sailed for what was always called " our Belgian Congo." Therefore

when foreign nations began to complain that the stipulations of the Berlin Conference were violated, and that there were grave abuses in the treatment of the natives, the Belgians felt as if the good name of their own country was attacked. They had no Colonial experience, and could not believe reports which the people of other countries with Colonies of their own had come to know might be true. To the Belgians the tales of cruelty inflicted on the natives seemed incredible. Some refused to listen to what was said. Others denied that there were any abuses. But the evidence of American, British, Italian, and Swedish witnesses, and of their own countrymen was too strong; and public feeling in Belgium became excited by the accounts of what was happening in the Congo. In the Chambers and in the Press there were loud protests against a system which not only denied the right of the natives to trade in the products of plains and forests which they had occupied from time immemorial, but was carried on by reducing them to what was virtually a state of slavery. Unhappily, some public men in Belgium said that the native had no rights; but that was not the true opinion of the Belgian people.

During the agitation which followed, in which Great Britain took so prominent a part, with the result that our relations with the Belgian Government became strained at a time when the international situation made it most important that there should be a good understanding between the two countries, King Leopold filled the stage as no single figure had filled it since Belgium entered the family of European States. He was held up to the hatred of the world; but in fairness it must be remembered that he had no personal gains in view. If he acted inconsistently with his obligations to the Powers who had met at Berlin, and if he allowed commercial companies to wring wealth from the Congo by questionable means, it was not to enrich himself or his family, but in order that he might be able to adorn Brussels and Ostend, build museums, and carry on other public works for the benefit of his country. "Je travaille pour le pays," he once said to Baron Beyens. "On ne me comprend encore, mais on y viendra." His rank offence was that when he found his resources insufficient, he supplied them by those methods which even his best friends have found it impossible to defend.[1]

At last King Leopold appointed Commissioners to investigate the situation in the Congo. They presented, in December

[1] "Ce serait faire acte de courtisanerie rétrospective que de prétendre justifier le Roi ou même de chercher à l'excuser" (Beyens, *La Question Africaine*, p. 43).

1905, a Report which convinced a majority of Belgians that the time had come when they must themselves assume the responsibilities of government. Reforms promised by the Congo Government were found inadequate. The King wished to keep in his own hands the *Fondation de la Couronne*, which would have left at his disposal the revenues drawn from a large portion of the Congo. Public sentiment in Belgium rose against this; and in December 1906 the Chamber of Representatives voted for the complete annexation, which took place within the next two years. The *Fondation de la Couronne* disappeared, and the whole of the territory hitherto known as the Independent Congo State became a Belgian Colony. A Colonial Law, promulgated in October 1908, provided for the appointment of a Minister and Council for the Congo, and for measures designed to promote the moral and material welfare of the native population. This transaction took place when the war clouds were beginning to gather over Europe; and the Belgians had barely time to set their African affairs in order when they were overwhelmed by the storm which burst in the summer of 1914.

CHAPTER VI

BEFORE THE STORM

In the summer of 1905 every town and village from Antwerp to Arlon and from Ostend to Liége was *en fête*. All the provinces, Flemish and Walloon alike, were celebrating the completion of the seventy-five years during which they had possessed the usual attributes of an organised body politic. Though their frontiers had been fixed by an arbitrary decision of the Great Powers, and were open to objection on several grounds, within these frontiers they were independent. Neither Spain nor Austria, neither France nor Holland had any longer the right to interfere with them. They had a Royal Family of their own, not placed over them by the fortunes of war, or by international arrangements in which they had no voice, but chosen by themselves; and they were living under a Constitution which they themselves had formed. Thus the Southern Netherlands, the rich heritage of the House of Burgundy, so long the Naboth's vineyard of Europe, the No Man's Land between the lines of warring States, now belonged to a community which, though composed of different races and without the tie of one common language, had, within a clearly defined territory, under its own dynasty, constitution, laws, and flag, the essential features of a nation.

Unfortunately, however, the *damnosa hereditas* of perpetual neutrality bequeathed by the Conference of London was not only inconsistent with complete independence, but had given rise to the delusion that the days when armies marched and fought along the valley of the Meuse, and on the plains of Flanders and Brabant, were gone for ever. Internal politics ran high, with Catholics, Liberals, and Socialists engaged in party warfare; but there was a widespread belief that, apart from the Congo question, nothing in the foreign relations of the country need cause anxiety. Most Belgians, conscious of their own peaceful aims, had perfect confidence in the friendly sentiments of their neighbours; and this feeling of security was so strong that in the year 1900 some members of the Government

actually refused even to discuss the question of army reform, on the ground that to change the existing system would be to throw doubt on the good faith of the Great Powers, and on the binding character of the Treaties by which they had guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium.

King Leopold was wiser, and did all he could to save his people from the perils to which he knew they were exposed. In 1887 he had warmly supported a proposal to abolish the system which allowed paid substitutes to take the place of those who were drawn for service, but had failed to carry the country with him. This system, the *remplacement*, remained in force; the country would not consent to universal sevice, which he wished to introduce; and in spite of all his efforts, renewed year after year, he could not persuade the politicians to deal seriously with national defence, which was by far the most vital of all questions for the Belgian people. In 1903 he returned from a visit to Berlin, where conversations with the Emperor had convinced him that Belgium was menaced by grave dangers; and, in the face of ministerial and popular opposition, he strove to rouse his subjects from their apathy. His last public appeals were made on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of independence. This was a few months after that sudden voyage of the Emperor William to Tangier, which, followed by the threatening language of a German envoy at Paris and the forced resignation of M. Delcassé, made it all but certain that peace would not be long preserved.

So long as Great Britain pursued the policy of "splendid isolation" the Belgians expected that, if there was war between France and Germany, the British Government would prevent a violation of their neutrality by renewing the Treaties of 1870. But the Anglo-French settlement of 1904 had altered the situation; and it was now feared that Great Britain, drawn into the web of continental politics on the side of France, would lose her liberty of action, and be unable to repeat her intervention as a neutral guarantor. The *Entente Cordiale*, therefore, alarmed Belgium.[1] There was an uneasy feeling that the new relations between London and Paris involved the adoption of some new policy on the Belgian question; and this feeling was, in fact, well founded. Ever since the dismissal of Prince Bismarck the foreign policy of the German Empire, bent on destroying the balance of power and obtaining universal domination, had kept Europe restless; and in the

[1] "La Belgique se trouvait alors dans une position plus précaire qu'en 1870" (Hymans, *La Neutralité de la Belgique*, p. 9).

opening years of the present century it was evident that the first attack would be on France.

After the invasion of 1870 the French, trusting apparently that the neutrality of Belgium would be respected, had constructed a line of defences opposite the German frontier from Verdun to Belfort, which made an advance by the route of 1870 so difficult that the General Staff at Berlin had resolved to attack through Belgium.[1] This was known to the British Intelligence Department when the danger of war became acute at the time of the Morocco incident; and at this point the changed relations between Great Britain and France bore fruit. However limited in scope the agreement of 1904 may have been originally, it rapidly developed into an understanding so close that Great Britain could not, if there was another war, maintain the neutral attitude of 1870, and settle the Belgian question by diplomatic action. The German plan of campaign left no choice, if war once began, except between armed intervention and the betrayal of both France and Belgium, with the risk that a great and hostile Power might establish itself at Antwerp and on the coast of Flanders. Accordingly, in view of the whole situation, it was felt at the Foreign Office and the War Office that we ought to be prepared for military co-operation with France against a war of aggression; and in 1906, after the change of Government which brought Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman into office, with Sir Edward Grey as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Mr. Haldane at the War Office, conferences were opened with the French Staff. No formal alliance was concluded. But it was tacitly understood from the first that Great Britain would go to war if the neutrality of Belgium was violated; and the French, for their part, made it known that they would not enter Belgian territory before it was invaded by Germany. On this footing the conferences between the two Staffs were carried on for the next few years, while at the same time the British General Staff and the Staff College at Camberley studied strategic questions which might arise if there was a campaign in Belgium, and collected information as to landing-places, railways, roads, canals, wells, and other matters for the use of the Expeditionary Force which Mr. Haldane was organising.[2]

[1] In the original plan of campaign, prepared by von Schlieffen, the right wing of the German army was to march through Dutch Limburg. But in 1906, when von Moltke became Chief of the General Staff, this plan was changed, as it was thought more prudent not to violate the neutrality of Holland.

[2] M. Yves Guyot, in an article on "Le Pangermanisme, la Hollande, et la Belgique," said that the ancient question of the Netherlands was at the root

There was some doubt as to what the Belgian army would do. The French Staff thought it might retire into Antwerp; and in the winter and spring of 1906 Colonel Barnardiston,[1] British Military Attaché at Brussels, had several conversations with General Ducarne, Chief of the Belgian Staff, about the possibility of war, informed him that Great Britain would send a force 100,000 strong to assist in the defence of Belgium, and asked how the Government were likely to receive this step. General Ducarne replied that from a military point of view it could only be advantageous, but that there was a political side to the question, on which he must consult the Minister for War. Colonel Barnardiston, having explained that the Expeditionary Force would land in France, near Dunkirk and Calais, asked if the Belgians could defend their country during the transport of the British troops, which he thought would occupy about ten days. General Ducarne said they could put 100,000 men into the field in four days, and that they would not take refuge in Antwerp.

It was specially noted in a *précis* of these interviews, drawn up by General Ducarne for his Government, that the entry of the British would not take place till after the violation of neutrality by the Germans. This alone is enough to dispose of the fiction that Belgium abandoned her neutrality, and plotted with the Entente Powers to attack Germany.[2] As a matter of fact, the Belgian Ministers made no response to Colonel Barnardiston's overtures, which they received coldly. They had confidence in the Imperial Government at that time, and were suspicious of Great Britain on account of her part in the Congo agitations. As to France, the anti-clerical policy of M. Combes, and the rupture of diplomatic relations with the Vatican, made the French almost as unpopular as the English; and, besides all this, the sympathy of many Belgians, both officers in the army and civilians, were strongly with Germany.

of the Anglo-French understanding. "La sauvegarde de l'indépendance de la Hollande et de la Belgique est la raison d'être de l'entente cordiale entre la France et l'Angleterre" (*Nineteenth Century and After*, September 1906). Without an agreement as to Egypt, Morocco, the Newfoundland fisheries, etc., there could be no co-operation on the vital question of the Low Countries.

[1] Afterwards Major-General Barnardiston, C.B. Commanded the British troops before Tsing-Tao early in the war. Died August 13, 1919.

[2] This subject is worn threadbare; but it may be recalled how the Imperial Government spread, and supported by garbling documents and mistranslating French words, the assertion that there was a "Convention" between Great Britain and Belgium, and how thoroughly this falsehood was exposed by the late M. Maxweiler (*La Belgique Neutre et Loyale*, and *Le Procés de la Neutralité Belge*) and by M. Passelecq (*Essai Critique et Notes sur l'altération des Documents Belges*).

M. Woeste, for instance, the Catholic statesman, called Belgium "the advanced guard of the Germans," and Professor Vanderkindere, a Liberal, spoke of "our mother Germany." Baron Greindl also, the Belgian Minister at Berlin, was often found to support the German interest.[1]

Belgium, however, was beginning to realise that there were dangers against which precautions must be taken. In October and November 1905 M. Baie published, in the *Petit Bleu* of Brussels, a series of articles proposing that Belgium and Holland, threatened with absorption by Germany, should form an alliance to defend their independence.[2] This proposal received considerable support in Belgium, though nothing came of it; and in 1906 63,000,000 francs were voted for the erection of new defences round Antwerp, and the forts of Liége and Namur were improved. The strategic railways which Germany was constructing in the direction of the frontier could mean only one thing. The danger of an invasion from the east was now a frequent topic of discussion in the Press; and a Belgian officer published a pamphlet containing a curiously accurate forecast of the events of August 1914.[3] At last, in 1909, after a sharp struggle with a section of his colleagues led by M. Woeste, M. Schollaert, the Catholic Minister, carried, with the help of M. Hymans and M. Vandervelde, the Liberal and Socialist leaders, an army law which abolished the *remplacement*, and introduced a modified form of personal service under which one son in every family had to join the ranks for fifteen months. This was a compromise; but it was expected to raise the strength of the army on a war footing to 180,000.

During the last stage of the debates on this law it became known that the King was dying; and as soon as the vote had been taken the measure was carried in haste to the Château of Laeken, where, on his deathbed in the Pavillon des Palmiers, he gave the royal assent with a hand so feeble that his signature was scarcely legible. This was the last public duty he performed. He died on the afternoon of December 17, 1909. For some years he had been falling, for reasons which are well

[1] General Barnardiston told the writer that he was surprised at the strength of the pro-German feeling in certain Belgian circles.

[2] A commercial alliance was also proposed. The question of an economic and military union is discussed at great length by a number of Belgian and Dutch public men in *L'Entente Hollando-Belge*, published at Brussels in March 1906.

[3] *Une Guerre Franco-Allemande: La Belgique envahie.* Liége, 1906. An English translation, with the addition of an essay on *Belgian Neutrality and British Naval Supremacy*, was published at Oxford in 1907.

known, in the estimation of his subjects; and the news of his death was received with conflicting emotions. Some tried to remember only the early promise of his reign, his public spirit, his tireless industry, his capacity for affairs, and the benefits which he had bestowed on Belgium. Others, with less charity, seemed to gloat over the follies of his private life. His private life, after all, was no worse than the private lives of Frederick William II of Prussia, or George IV of England; but the world was no longer so tolerant as it once had been of Royal weaknesses. Leopold II of Belgium paid far too little respect to public opinion; and this was why, though he did great things for his country, there was so dark a cloud over the last years of his life.

The King, having left no heir male in the direct line, was succeeded by his nephew Prince Albert, son of his brother Philip, Count of Flanders [1]; and on the morning of December 23, 1909 the third King of the Belgians rode in state from the Château of Laeken to the Chambers at Brussels, where, first in French and then in Flemish, he took the coronation oath, swearing that he would observe the Constitution and laws of the Belgian people, and maintain their independence and territorial integrity—that vow which he has kept so faithfully.

One passage in the Speech from the Throne attracted special attention. King Albert had lately returned from travelling in the Congo deeply impressed by the need for thoroughly reforming the administration; and now he gave, for himself and his country, a solemn pledge that in future Belgian colonial policy would be a policy of humanity and progress. "Belgium," he said, "always keeps her promises, and when she undertakes to apply to the Congo a programme worthy of herself, no one has the right to doubt her word."

Though extensive reforms had been already announced, British recognition of the annexation had been delayed till it was certain that the welfare of the native races and freedom of commerce were definitely secured. This increased the strain on Anglo-Belgian relations which had been causing anxiety for several years; and the King's declaration was welcomed in Great Britain, where there was a very genuine desire to be on good terms with the Belgian people and their Government.[2]

[1] The only son of Leopold II died in early boyhood in the year 1859. By the Belgian Constitution females are excluded from the Throne. If all heirs male are awanting, the King can name his successor, subject to the approval of the Chambers.

[2] Great Britain recognised the annexation of the Congo by Belgium in June 1913.

The accession of King Albert changed the relations between the Courts of Brussels and Berlin, which had been estranged during the last years of King Leopold. The Emperor William had highly approved of the marriage between the heir-presumptive to the Belgian throne and the Duchess Elizabeth, daughter of Charles Duke of Bavaria, which was celebrated at Munich in the autumn of 1900. In June 1910 the young King and Queen of the Belgians paid a visit to Berlin, where they received many assurances of good-will. Later in the same year the Emperor and Empress returned this visit. Brussels was magnificently decorated in their honour; and the Emperor said, at a dinner in the palace, that he saw in the way he had been received a token of friendship "not only between our families, but also between our peoples." He lavished smiles on everyone, and admired everything, the spacious avenue of Tervueren, the fine houses, the exquisite beauty of the Hôtel de Ville, the Grande Place. "Belgium, which William II had not seen for thirty-two years, must have seemed to him a fair jewel, worthy to be added to his Crown," says Baron Beyens, whom King Leopold had once advised to beware of Prussian civilities.

Nothing could have exceeded the cordiality of the Emperor; and it is easy to see why he was at such pains to make a good impression. His armies were to enter Belgium in the next war. The Belgian Ministers might possibly be induced to content themselves with a protest, and give a free passage into France, if Belgium and Germany were on terms so friendly that Belgium, irritated by British policy on the Congo question, chose to trust the Cabinet of Berlin rather than the Cabinet of St. James's. A complete rupture between London and Brussels might leave Belgium at the mercy of Germany. If that could be brought about, so much the better. But, in any case, it was obviously desirable to disarm suspicions of German designs, which, prevalent in Belgium for some time, had lately been increased by the Dutch plan to fortify Flushing, which was said to have been adopted at the instigation of the Emperor.

For more than a year rumours had been floating about that in the winter of 1904 the Emperor sent a private letter to Queen Wilhelmina intimating that he would occupy Dutch territory if Holland did not fortify her coasts. Early in 1910 awkward questions on this subject were asked in the States-General at The Hague. The Minister for Foreign Affairs denied that there had been any communications between

Holland and Germany about the coast defences; but in spite of this official denial it was believed, not only in Belgium but also in Holland, that the proposal to fortify Flushing was the result of a letter sent from Berlin either to the Queen or to someone near the Throne, and that the object was to make it difficult for Great Britain to send forces up the Schelde to help Antwerp, and threaten the right wing of the Germans on their march through Belgium. During the controversy on this subject the Belgian and French newspapers were so persistent in asserting that the neutrality of Belgium was in danger that the Belgian Foreign Office suggested that a declaration in the Reichstag would calm public opinion. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, though he knew the plan of campaign prepared by the General Staff, had the duplicity to reply that Germany had no intention of violating Belgian neutrality, but that a public declaration would weaken her military position in regard to France.

This definite statement by the Imperial Chancellor was, of course, so far satisfactory to the Belgian Cabinet; and the courtesies exchanged at Brussels, with the amicable demeanour of the Emperor during his visit to London in 1911, misled many into believing that the general harmony might remain undisturbed. Suddenly the world was startled by the arrival of the *Panther* at Agadir.[1]

By this episode, the second Moroccan crisis, Belgian interests were seriously affected. The pretext for sending a warship to Agadir was the protection of German subjects in those regions. It was soon found, however, that the annexation of South-West Morocco was aimed at by the powerful Pan-German party. The firm resistance of France, backed up by Great Britain, prevented the accomplishment of this design. But France, by the Convention of November 4, 1911, agreed, for the sake of peace, to cede part of the French Congo to Germany; and this settlement was full of danger to Belgium.

Amongst the vast aims of the Pan-German Party was the creation of a German Empire of Central Africa. There the most tempting prize was the Belgian Congo. German East Africa extended to the Congo frontier between Uganda and Rhodesia. On the west the German Cameroons were separated from the Belgian Colony by the French Congo; and when the German designs in Morocco were abandoned the Imperial Government insisted on acquiring a part of the French Congo which would join the Cameroons to the Belgian Congo. They

[1] July 1911.

were absolutely determined, Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter told M. Cambon, to obtain access to the Congo.[1] France resisted for a time, but had to yield ; and the result was that Germany secured a military highway leading into the Belgian Congo from the west. She already touched the colony in the east ; and the Pan-Germans made no secret of their intentions. "We may console ourselves for not obtaining Morocco," Herr von Liebert said in a speech at Leipzig. "We can take the Belgian Congo when we please." That the Congo had been declared neutral was no obstacle ; and General von Bernhardi, in his book on the next war, went so far as to suggest that the acquisition of a colony by the Belgians was a breach of their neutrality, forgetting apparently that Germany had been the first Power to recognise the annexation.[2]

In January 1912 Baron Beyens, who had succeeded Baron Greindl as Belgian Minister at Berlin, received from Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter positive assurances that there was no reason for imagining that Germany would violate the neutrality of Belgium. But the British effort to clear the air by negotiations at Berlin was met by a large increase of the Imperial army and navy, and by an insidious attempt to obtain a promise of British neutrality in a war between Germany and France ; and after the return of Lord Haldane, who had made it plain to the German Government that they must not count on Great Britain acquiescing in a violation of Belgian neutrality, Colonel Bridges,[3] Military Attaché at Brussels, reopened the question of defending Belgium, and told General Jungbluth, who had succeeded General Ducarne at the head of the Staff, that an Expeditionary Force, 160,000 strong, was ready for service.

What passed on this occasion proves that there was not then, any more than in 1906, a convention or alliance between Great Britain and Belgium. Colonel Bridges said that British troops would have landed if war had broken out during the Agadir crisis of the previous year, even if no call for help had come from Belgium ; and General Jungbluth's reply shows

[1] French Yellow Book, *Affaires du Maroc*, No. 480.

[2] The late Mr. George Saunders, a most competent authority on German policy, pointed out that the partition of the French Congo in 1911 must have been designed as the prelude to aggressive German action against the Belgian Congo : *The Last of the Huns*, p. 150. On this subject see Mr. Edwyn Bevan's admirable introduction to his translation of von Zimmermann's *Deutsche Kaiserreich Mittelafrika als Grundlage einer neuen Deutschen Weltpolitik*, and Professor Bourquin's *Les Visées de l'Allemagne sur le Congo Belge* (Cahiers Belges, No. 18).

[3] Afterwards Lieut.-General ; served in the war ; wounded at Mons and Nieuport ; with the British Mission to U.S.A. in 1917 ; now Governor of S. Australia.

that he resented this. The consent of the Belgian Government, he said, would have been necessary. This was true, provided Belgian neutrality had been respected, but not otherwise. The position of Belgium was fixed by international law. Her neutrality was part of the European system, imposed upon her as one of the conditions of her independence, not only in her interest, but in the interest of all the Powers. Declared perpetually neutral, she was bound to maintain her neutrality, and would have forfeited her right to independence if she had been guilty of the non-neutral act of permitting a German army to pass through in order to attack France. There was, however, no danger of this happening; for the Belgians were so scrupulously faithful to their obligations as neutrals that the strategic plans of their Staff were drawn up so as to provide for defence against either Germany, France or Great Britain. General Jungbluth said they were perfectly able to prevent the Germans going through. But that was a matter on which Great Britain, as one of the guarantors of Belgian neutrality, had a right to form her own opinion. If she thought her intervention necessary in order to maintain the European system of which that neutrality was a part, it was her duty to intervene, even against the wishes of the Belgian Government. And, in addition, since 1904 the interests of France had to be considered by the British Government.

Some of the Belgian newspapers accused Great Britain of planning the seizure of Antwerp and the invasion of Belgium in order to anticipate the Germans. These papers probably wrote under German inspiration. Unfortunately, there was so much bad feeling against the British, and so much suspicion of our policy, that these accusations had considerable influence. But that the British Staff were preparing to defend Belgium, and not to attack Germany through Belgium, was made perfectly plain by the reason which Colonel Bridges gave for the proposal to send the Expeditionary Force. Belgium, he said, would not, if left to herself, be strong enough to repel the Germans. As a matter of fact, there never was any intention to send troops unless her neutrality was violated.[1] Great Britain and France had been in agreement as to that ever since 1906. In February 1913 M. Poincaré assured the Belgian Minister at Paris that France would never take the initiative in entering Belgium. But the attitude of the Belgian Ministers was: "The conditions of to-day may be reversed to-morrow by the

[1] Sir Edward Grey to Sir Francis Villiers, British Minister at Brussels, April 17, 1913. *Second Belgian Grey Book*, No. 100.

emergence of new circumstances, and our only object is to prevent, so far as lies in our power, any violation of our neutrality." [1]

King Albert, ever since his accession, had been urging the necessity for strengthening the army. His arguments had been enforced by a private warning which had been received, it is understood from the King of Romania, that " the miracle of 1870, which had preserved Belgium between two belligerents," would not occur again. Disquieting information as to the plans of the German Staff had reached the Cabinet of Brussels ; and, though the old Catholic party still objected to all proposals for reform, M. de Broqueville, now Prime Minister, resolved to make a sweeping change in the army system. The Belgian Chambers met in secret ; and the Minister explained that the new measure was made necessary by certain definite knowledge which the Government possessed respecting the designs of Germany. The German Military Law of June 1912 was, he said, the greatest extension of the Imperial Forces since 1870. It would give Germany a superiority over France of 300,000 men ; and the Government had recently obtained information that the object of this increase in numbers was an invasion of Belgium. It appeared, from German plans of mobilisation which had been communicated to the Government, that in one night 50,000 troops could be brought to Liége. It was, therefore, necessary to be on guard against Germany. As to France, M. de Broqueville said that, though the French army had been increased, he had no fear of an attack on Belgian independence from that quarter. But he knew that the French General Staff had studied the question of entering Belgium if her neutrality was violated by Germany. They must, therefore, be prepared on both frontiers ; for the danger was that foreign Powers would enter Belgium in order to defend her. This statement shows that the Belgians, though now aware of the German peril, thought they could maintain their neutrality by their own resources. These, however, they were over-estimating.

No member of the Belgian Chambers revealed what was said during this secret session.[2] But that there was to be a

[1] Baron Guillaume, Belgian Minister at Paris, to M. Davignon, February 22, 1913.

[2] In November 1914, when there was no longer any reason for concealment, M. de Broqueville authorised the publication of a report of his speech compiled by one of the deputies. It appeared in the Dutch Labour paper *Het Volk*, and will be found in *Les Chefs d'État-Major de l'Armée Belge, et le Respect de la Neutralité*, by Major Marsily of the Belgian Staff, published in 1917.

new army law was well known to the Germans; and in the Reichstag on April 29, 1913 a deputy said that the approach of war between Germany and France was viewed with apprehension in Belgium, where it was feared that Germany would not respect the neutrality guaranteed by the Treaties of 1839. Herr von Jagow, Secretary of State, replied that Germany would respect the conventions by which the neutrality of Belgium was established; and in answer to further questions General von Heeringen, Minister for War, said that Germany would not lose sight of the fact that the neutrality of Belgium was guaranteed by international law.[1]

Though the Belgian Cabinet always hoped for the best, they knew too much to be taken in by these declarations. The new military law was laid before the Chambers without delay, and passed in June 1913. It provided for universal compulsory service, with a few exceptions. There was to be an annual contingent of between 30,000 and 40,000, which was expected to produce an army of 350,000 in time of war. The wish of Leopold II was thus accomplished, but not till it was too late; for the full numbers would not be obtained till 1918. "Les ruines de Dinant, de Louvain, de Tamines, d'Ypres et de tant d'autres villes, les dévastations, les larmes qu'ont coutées tant de deuils sont avant tout les filles de l'ignorance et du jugement faux de ceux qui ont retardé jusqu'au dernier jour la mise en état de défense du pays."[2] In these words Comte Louis de Lichtervelde laments the long and fatal neglect of national defence for which M. Woeste was largely responsible. The resistance of the small and poorly equipped Belgian army when the war began shows that if 350,000 men, sufficiently organised and armed, had been then available, such a force, though certainly powerless to drive the Germans back, might have delayed their advance till the French and British armies had time to concentrate for a combined offensive through Belgium. It is unlikely that the fall of Liége could have been prevented; but Namur, Antwerp, Zeebrugge, and the Flemish coast might have been saved; and the course of the war would in that case have been different.

A few months after the new army law was voted King Albert paid his last visit to the Emperor William. The Emperor must have felt uneasy in the presence of his guest. His General Staff had decided that war with France was not to be delayed much longer; and war with France meant the in-

[1] Baron Beyens to M. Davignon, May 2, 1913; *First Belgian Grey Book*, No. 12.
[2] *La Revue Générale*, September 1919, p. 537.

vasion of Belgium by force, if Belgium could not be cajoled or bullied into consenting to the violation of her neutrality. To feast the King of the Belgians at Potsdam, knowing that only a few miles away, in the Great General Staff at Berlin, the plans were lying ready for a campaign which would let loose the horrors of Prussian warfare on the inoffensive Belgian people, was surely enough to make the Emperor feel "over-strained and irritable," as M. Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador at Berlin, described him in a letter to Paris soon afterwards. When the Emperor and General von Moltke, Chief of the Staff, said the French were preparing to attack Germany, King Albert, who knew better, tried to persuade them that they were mistaken, hoping perhaps that they believed what they were saying. But they would not listen. They evidently wished to convince him that Germany was irresistible, that France would be utterly defeated, and that it would be useless for Belgium to refuse her assent to the passage of the German army. The Pan-Germans and the War Party were now in the ascendent; and, though the final verdict of history cannot yet be given, it is not uncharitable to suspect that the Emperor was impatient to tear off a mask he had long been wearing, and appear before the world in the helmet of the Supreme War Lord.

Belgium's hour of trial might come at any moment.

CHAPTER VII

THE LOST TERRITORY (LUXEMBOURG)

DURING the seventy-five years which followed the Treaties of 1839, while the Kingdom of Belgium was rising to an important place among the European States, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, that morsel of territory the loss of which was such a painful blow to Leopold I and his subjects, had a separate history of its own, a short account of which may be conveniently interpolated at this point; for, though separate, it was interwoven with the history of Belgium from time to time during the period between 1839 and the outbreak of war in 1914.

In October 1840 William I of the Netherlands, then in his sixty-eighth year, abdicated in order to marry the Catholic Comtesse d'Oultremont.[1] He was succeeded by his eldest son as William II, King of the Netherlands and Grand Duke of Luxembourg. The new Grand Duke had been born in December 1792, and was brought to England when his grandfather, the Stadtholder William V of Orange, escaped with his family from Holland in January 1795.[2] After education in England and at the Military School of Berlin, he received a commission in the British army. In 1806 he became Hereditary Prince of Orange on the death of his grandfather. Having served under Wellington in Spain, where he distinguished himself at Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo, he was sent to London with despatches after the battle of Vittoria. Then followed, in December 1813, his engagement to the Princess Charlotte of Wales, that family arrangement which was defeated by the boudoir cabal in favour of Prince Leopold, the future King of the Belgians, whom the Princess soon afterwards married, and by the political

[1] The first rumours of this marriage seem to have surprised the Court at Windsor, where General Alava, Wellington's friend, was on a visit in October 1839. "If you should hear anything more of Roi Guillaume's marriage, pray let me hear it," the Queen wrote to her Uncle Leopold. "Old Alava, who was here for two nights last week, told me that he knew *Pauline d'Oultremont* many years ago, when she was young, and very gay and pretty, but he wonders much at this marriage, as the King hates Catholics." William I died in 1843.

[2] *Supra*, p. 29.

intrigues of the Opposition. During the Hundred Days he fought at Quatre Bras and at Waterloo, where he was carried off the field severely wounded. On February 1, 1816, he married the Grand Duchess Anna Pavlovna, sister of the Emperor Alexander I.

Between 1816 and 1830 he was constantly in Belgium, where at first he inhabited the building in the Rue de la Loi, which is now the Belgian Foreign Office, and afterwards either the Château of Tervueren or a palace which was erected for him near the park.[1] Charles White speaks of his "chivalrous valour in the field," and his "courteous affability and gaiety in social intercourse," which made him popular in the Southern Netherlands.[2] We have seen how, in 1830, he pleaded with his father to conciliate the Belgians instead of trying to coerce them, and with what sorrow he bade them farewell. In 1840, after his father abdicated, the people of the Grand Duchy were still mourning their separation from the Belgian provinces: and, as a friend of Belgium, he was cordially welcomed when he paid his first official visit to the town of Luxembourg, where his arrival is commemorated by a statue in the square which bears his name, the Place Guillaume. But it was against the wishes of the Luxembourgers that he agreed to the proposal of his kinsman, the King of Prussia, that the Grand Duchy should join the Germanic Confederation. This economic alliance continued till 1919.

From 1840 to 1848 Luxembourg was administered, on behalf of the Grand Duke, by a Governor and five Officers of State; but in 1848, amid the excitement which spread from France all over Europe after the fall of Louis Philippe, a Constituent Assembly met, and a Constitution was proclaimed. The democratic principles of the Belgian Constitution were adopted; and, besides limiting the powers of the Grand Duke as the powers of the King were limited in Belgium, this Constitution placed the legislative authority in the hands of only one Chamber, which was elected on a wide franchise. Luxembourg, being a State of the Germanic Confederation, was represented at the Federal Diet conjointly with Limburg. The Confederation, of which the Diet was the mouthpiece, though nominally a league of States, was in reality a league of Sovereign Princes, whose

[1] Now the Palais des Académies, the headquarters of the "Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres, et des Beaux Arts." During the war it was used as a hospital by the Germans, who destroyed a quantity of fine old furniture, and left several dead bodies lying in the cellars when they retreated from Brussels in November 1918.

[2] White, *The Belgic Revolution of* 1830, i. 127 (published in 1835).

policy was to suppress all liberal movements. But Luxembourg had always shared with the Belgian provinces their traditions of public and private liberty; and, in order to guard against interference by the Diet with the local independence of the Grand Duchy, it was provided that any ordinance affecting its interests which might be voted at Frankfurt must be approved by the Grand Duke and the Chamber.

In 1849 William II died. His son came to the Dutch throne; and it was soon found that not only the person, but the character, of the ruler had changed. William III began his reign by refusing to visit Luxembourg and swear fidelity to the Constitution. Deputies from the Grand Duchy went to The Hague; and he then took the oath, but told them angrily that he was ready to sell "this famous Grand Duchy" to any Jew from Amsterdam.[1] Next year he handed over the administration to his brother Prince Henry of the Netherlands, who went to Luxembourg, and lived there for many years.

Prince Henry acted as Governor-General, or Stadtholder, to the satisfaction of the people, but he had not been long in office before the Constitution of 1848 was abrogated. When the forces of reaction recovered their ascendency in Central Europe the Federal Diet resolved that the system of autocratic rule must be restored in the States of the Confederation.[2] The Chamber at Luxembourg was dissolved after refusing even to discuss a proposal to revise the Constitution; and in the autumn of 1856 the Grand Duke assumed the authority of an absolute ruler, issued his orders from The Hague, and was represented at Luxembourg by a Council appointed by himself, with his brother as Viceroy.

Hitherto the troops in the fortress had been partly Prussians and partly Netherlanders; but in November 1856 it was agreed, between the King of Prussia and the Grand Duke, that the garrison was to be entirely Prussian.

Ten years later the curtain had risen in the drama which ended with the death of one Empire and the birth of another. In 1839, when the Grand Duchy was finally torn from Belgium, the young Prussian officer known as "Mad Bismarck," then twenty-four years old (he was born when Napoleon was at

[1] "Guillaume III, Roi des Pays-Bas," by Baron de Haulleville: *Le Correspondant*, December 1890, p. 789.

[2] "By the middle of 1851 the Confederation was re-established on its old footing, with its incapacity for good, its old capacities for mischief, and, it may be added, its old willingness to use these capacities for the suppression of free institutions in the more progressive States" (Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire*, p. 460. Edition of 1922).

Paris preparing for the campaign of Waterloo) was working in the Crown Office at Potsdam, and the son of Queen Hortense, whose visit to Strasbourg three years before had so alarmed Louis Philippe that he exiled him to America, was back in Europe, living in London, where the publication of his *Idées Napoléoniennes* made some people wonder whether the man of fashion, who seemed to do little but amuse himself with Lady Blessington and her set, might not be secretly conspiring to gain the confidence of the French army, whose thoughts were always turning to the Rhine. Now, after twenty-seven years, these two were the central figures in the "Affair of Luxembourg," which was the prelude to the last act of the tragedy on which the curtain went down at Sedan.

"But for me," Prince Bismarck confessed in his old age, "three great wars would not have been fought, parents, brothers, sisters and widows would not have mourned." [1] In the summer of 1866 the second of the three wars for which he admitted he was responsible, and by which he raised Prussia to the headship of the German States, was finished at Königgrätz; the long contest for supremacy between Prussia and Austria was decided in favour of Prussia; the Germanic Confederation was dissolved; and the North German Confederation was formed, with its armies under the command of the King of Prussia, whose dominions were enlarged by the annexation of the Danish Duchies and other lands. It was only sixty years since Jena; and now Prussia, already in possession of the Rhenish provinces since 1815, and thus pressing closely on the frontiers of Holland and Belgium, with a garrison threatening France from the fortress of Luxembourg, had increased her population by several millions. The balance of power was upset, and to restore it Napoleon III tried to obtain territorial compensation.

The first claim was for the left bank of the Rhine down to Mainz, which was to be ceded to France. This proposal, which meant that the Palatinate, part of Hesse Darmstadt, and a Prussian stronghold on the Rhine would become French possessions, was peremptorily rejected by Count Bismarck. Then came the suggestion of an independent State in the Rhineland to serve as a buffer separating Germany from France. This scheme was soon abandoned; and the Emperor Napoleon proposed that France should acquire the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and that Prussia should undertake to grant him armed aid if he attacked Belgium. These proposals were set forth in the draft Treaty written by Benedetti, the

[1] Moritz Busch, *Unser Reichskanzler*, i. 116 (English Edition, i. 114).

French Ambassador at Berlin, on instructions from Paris, and handed to Bismarck in August 1866. What part Bismarck played in this nefarious plot, whether he did not all along act as an *agent provocateur*, whether even he was not the first to suggest it, is, it need hardly be said, a question which has never been cleared up. But as soon as he had the draft Treaty safely in his possession he avoided going further in the matter of Belgium.

While the fate of Belgium was in the balance Baron Nothomb, Leopold II's Minister at Berlin, had negotiated a marriage between the Count of Flanders, the King's brother, and the Princess Mary of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, sister of the Prince whose candidature for the throne of Spain was afterwards used by Bismarck to force on the quarrel in which the French Military Party were, unhappily, so ready to engage. The prospect of such a marriage,[1] which would bring the Courts of Berlin and Brussels into close relations, was a warning to the Emperor Napoleon that if he prosecuted his designs on Belgium he would, almost certainly, have to reckon with the opposition of Prussia; and he forthwith concentrated his attention on obtaining Luxembourg.

The partition of the Grand Duchy in 1839 had given two-thirds of the disputed territory, including the district of Arlon, to Belgium.[2] The smaller portion, left to the House of Orange-Nassau, covered rather less than a thousand square miles, and had a population of about 140,000. It was wonderfully picturesque, full of beautiful scenery, hills, fertile valleys, streams flowing through deep ravines, fine forests, and ancient castles perched on romantic heights. But it was a minute corner of Europe, and would never have attracted notice but for its strategic position between Belgium, Rhenish Prussia, and Lorraine. Since 1815 it had been a personal possession of the King of the Netherlands, who was a Prince of the Germanic Confederation. That Confederation no longer existed; but towards the close of 1866 it was rumoured in a way which left little doubt of the truth, though the fact was not officially made known till next year, that defensive and offensive alliances had been concluded between Prussia and the South German States of Baden, Bavaria, Württemberg, and Hesse. The King Grand Duke was alarmed.

[1] This marriage was celebrated on April 26, 1867.

[2] Palmerston insisted that Arlon must be assigned to Belgium, and kept the Conference of London sitting up almost the whole of one night till he carried his point.

The Prussians had, by two wars within three years, extended their frontiers till they reached the frontier of the Netherlands; and the King feared that he might be called on to follow the example of the South German States, and place, not only Luxembourg, which had already ties with Germany, but all his provinces, under the control of a Power which long years before had hoped to annex Holland, or at least part of it.[1] Disturbed by fears of what might happen if they were invited to join Prussia and the South German States, and were threatened with war if they declined, the Cabinet of The Hague opened communications with Paris, and inquired if France would come to their assistance. This *démarche* made it easy for the Emperor Napoleon to approach the Grand Duke on the subject of Luxembourg; and in February 1867 a reply from Paris to The Hague raised the question of whether, the Germanic Confederation having been dissolved, Prussia was any longer entitled to maintain a garrison in the fortress of Luxembourg, and proposed the purchase of the Grand Duchy by France as the best settlement of an awkward situation.

Seventeen years before, at the time of his accession, William III had said that he was willing to sell the Grand Duchy. Now, after much hesitation, he ventured to close with Napoleon's offer; and in March it was settled that the sale was to take place. So far there had been no opposition from Berlin, where, on the contrary, Bismarck had been encouraging Benedetti to believe that if the cession of Luxembourg to France was secretly arranged Prussia would accept it as a *fait accompli*. At this point, however, the Treaties between Prussia and the South German States were disclosed. Startled by this revelation, which confirmed the rumours of the year before, the King Grand Duke refused to proceed further without the consent of Prussia.

Meanwhile Bismarck had taken care to let it be known throughout Germany that there were private negotiations on foot for the transfer of Luxembourg to France; and the result

[1] In 1806 Lucchesini, one of the most dangerous plotters at the Court of Berlin, told this to Friedrich von Gentz as "the deepest secret of the Prussian Court." It may be noted that in 1866 Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, who was living at Florence with Count von Usedom, the Prussian Envoy, received some interesting information from him about Prussian policy towards Holland. "Amongst other things that Usedom told me," he says, "was this, that it was a settled plan at Berlin to bring about, in connection with the proposed revival of the German Empire, also a union with Holland, when Germany, having become a maritime Power, would reassert against England, on Holland's behalf, a claim to the old Dutch colonies" (W. Blunt, *Gordon at Khartoum*, p. 396).

was a universal cry for war against the French rather than allow them to obtain a fortress which, the Army and the Press declared, must remain as it was, to be used either as a defensive position, or as a base for operations against France. Count Beust, the Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, told the Emperor Napoleon that the proposed transfer had enabled Bismarck to rally round himself all the disaffected elements; and the warlike passions of the German people having been skilfully raised to the requisite boiling point, the Prussian Minister at The Hague was instructed to announce that the cession of Luxembourg to France would be regarded by Prussia as a *casus belli*. This made the King Grand Duke draw back and refuse to complete the transaction. The French Ambassador in London [1] then told Lord Stanley, who was at that time Foreign Secretary, that the Cabinet of Paris would drop the question of acquiring the Grand Duchy, and confine themselves to demanding the evacuation of the fortress. On hearing this Bismarck declared, through Count von Bernstorff, the Prussian Ambassador in London, that he would not withdraw the garrison; and it seemed as if war could not be averted. But diplomacy came to the rescue.

It was now the middle of April. A month before Lord Augustus Loftus, British Minister at Berlin, when writing to Lord Stanley, had mentioned a report that there were negotiations for the cession of Luxembourg to France.[2] Apparently no information on the subject had been received at the Foreign Office till then. A fortnight later Loftus writes that he has been informed that a telegram from the Netherlands Government to the authorities at Luxembourg, intercepted when passing through Belgium, stated that France was pressing the King Grand Duke to cede Luxembourg; that the attitude of Prussia was uncertain, though the military party were "extremely opposed to the withdrawal of the garrison"; that Bismarck would not commit himself; and that the King of Prussia had said that nothing could be done without his consent.[3] In spite of all this apparent uncertainty, one thing was certain, that there was a serious danger of war between France and Prussia.

Great Britain and Austria were, however, working for the preservation of peace. The proposal of the British Cabinet was that Luxembourg should be neutralised, and either given

[1] The Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne.
[2] Loftus to Stanley, March 16, 1867. F.O., Prussia, 142.
[3] Loftus to Stanley, "Most confidential," March 28, 1867.

to Belgium or left in possession of the King Grand Duke, from whom a pledge was to be obtained that he would not part with it. The Austrian proposal was that Luxembourg should be given to Belgium in exchange for the Duchy of Bouillon, and the districts of Marienbourg and Philippeville, which France had lost in 1815.

The French Minister de Moustier supported the second of these proposals, not only because Bouillon, Marienbourg, and Philippeville would be desirable acquisitions, but also in the hope, it seems, that if Belgium obtained Luxembourg both Belgium and Luxembourg, after they were united, would fall together into the hands of France at some future time.[1] But though M. Rogier, the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and M. van de Weyer, the Minister in London, were in favour of an attempt to change the settlement of 1839, they refused the Austrian solution. Van de Weyer explained to Lord Stanley that, under the Belgian Constitution, the exchange of territory proposed by Austria could not take place except by consent of the country at a general election, and that the country would never agree to cede any territory to France.[2] It was suggested by Rogier that Belgium might buy Luxembourg; and Ollivier says that if the Cabinet of Brussels had acted resolutely they would probably have recovered the lost territory. But M. Frére-Orban, the Prime Minister, Leopold II, and a majority of the Cabinet shrank from taking any step which might raise the whole question of the Treaties by which the neutrality of Belgium was guaranteed. They were also unwilling to risk a conflict with Holland; and all plans for recovering Luxembourg were allowed to drop.[3]

At last, on April 23, Lord Stanley heard from Sir Andrew Buchanan, our Ambassador at St. Petersburg, that Baron Brunnow, the Russian Minister in England, had been instructed to propose that the question of Luxembourg should be discussed in London by a Conference of the Powers, "on the basis of neutralisation and the extension to that Duchy of the guarantee

[1] "Que la Belgique s'annexe le Luxembourg, me disait un diplomate étranger peu scrupuleux, et la France s'annexera le tout" (Rothan, *L'Affaire de Luxembourg*, p. 323).

[2] Stanley to Lord Cowley (British Ambassador at Paris), April 18, 1867: "Correspondence respecting the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg," *Parl. Papers*, 1867, lxxiv).

[3] "Sans doute l'amputation [the partition of 1839] avait été douloureuse, mais ni le peuple, ni la presse, ni le Parlement ne s'occupaient plus des frères perdus; tous considéraient la séparation, tombée dans la domaine des faits accomplis, comme devant être éternelle" (Ollivier, *L'Empire Libéral*, ix. 331).

now enjoyed by Belgium." [1] The British Cabinet were not inclined to fall in with this proposal unless both France and Prussia undertook beforehand to accept the findings of the Conference. France, it was expected, would agree to this condition; but whether the Prussians would come to a Conference, would promise to be bound by its decisions, or would, if they did promise, keep their word, was doubtful. For some time the British Court and Cabinet had been fully aware that Prussia was not to be trusted any more than in days gone by, at the time, for instance, of the Treaty of Basle, or when Haugwitz ruined the third coalition by his treachery. In 1864, after the Danish War, Queen Victoria had expressed a wish that "Prussia should at least be made aware of what she and her Government, and every honest man in Europe, must think of the gross violation of every assurance and pledge she has given, which Prussia has been guilty of." [2] When the Luxembourg crisis became acute the Queen had no doubt that Bismarck, though he denied it, had encouraged the Emperor to claim the Grand Duchy, and she said so to the French Ambassador. Disraeli was equally suspicious. "Two things seem clear to me," he wrote to Stanley: "that France is not prepared and that Bismarck lies to everyone. His explanations prove his perfidy." [3]

Bismarck, however, saw that, strong though German feeling was against any concession, Prussia's right to keep a garrison in Luxembourg was more than doubtful, and that he would put himself altogether in the wrong before Europe if he went to war rather than consent to the evacuation. And besides, even if he had been prepared to disregard the opinion of Great Britain and the other Powers, there was another reason for going to a Conference and abiding by its decisions. He had made an offer of alliance to Austria. But that offer had been rejected by Beust, who held that the military alliances between Prussia and the Southern States, concluded behind the back of Austria before the Treaty of Prague was signed, were a breach of faith and inconsistent with the terms on which Austria had made peace. What the Emperor Francis Joseph and his Ministers might do if Prussia went to war with France was dubious. This was, perhaps, what turned the scale in favour of postponing the next war, which von Moltke was insisting should begin before France was ready, to a more convenient

[1] Stanley to Cowley, April 24, 1867.
[2] Fitzmaurice, *Life of Earl Granville*, i. 476.
[3] Buckle, *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, iv. 471.

season [1]; and on April 27 Count Bernstorff received a telegram from Berlin announcing that Prussia would agree to the evacuation and demolition of the fortress, if the Powers desired it, on condition that the Conference "gives a European guarantee for the neutrality of Luxembourg, such as now exists in the case of Belgium."

The British Government having agreed to a Conference in London, with the stipulation that the invitations should be issued in the name of the King Grand Duke as Sovereign of Luxembourg, Stanley sent out notices from the Foreign Office on May 6, asking the plenipotentiaries to meet at Downing Street on the following day. He had prepared a draft treaty which provided for the neutralisation of the Grand Duchy and the evacuation of the fortress, but did not mention a guarantee of the proposed neutrality; and on the morning of May 7 Bernstorff informed him that his instructions were to take no part in the proceedings of the Conference unless a collective guarantee of the neutrality of Luxembourg was to be given. When the Conference assembled Stanley, who was in the chair, began the proceedings by reading his draft Treaty. Bernstorff at once moved an amendment providing for the insertion of a guarantee by the Powers. The British Minister said he preferred his own draft. But, finding that there was a majority in favour of the guarantee, he said he would refer the question to the Cabinet; and the Conference adjourned.[2]

Half a century later a British Government, apparently without any hesitation, committed the country (whether wisely or unwisely remains to be seen) to an arrangement which made it practically responsible, during a number of years, for the future of a wide region in Asia, thousands of miles distant from the shores of England. But in the more cautious days of 1867 the Cabinet had grave misgivings about the far less onerous guarantee of Luxembourg. Lord Stanley, in particular, was most unwilling to give way on this point. "The very name and idea of a new guarantee," he afterwards said in the House of Commons, "was a thing so utterly distasteful to me, so utterly contrary to all the theories of foreign policy which my colleagues and I had laid down for ourselves, that for two or three days I hesitated before giving my assent, on the part of

[1] Long afterwards Prince Bismarck told Busch that his dominant idea at the time of the Luxembourg crisis was to delay the war till the organisation of the army was complete (*Unser Reichskanzler*, ii. 45).

[2] "Protocols of the Conference," Parl. Papers, 1867, lxxiv. Lord Stanley's draft is annexed to the first protocol.

the British Government, to the arrangement." The Cabinet, however, knew that if they stood out the Conference would break down, and war would follow. They therefore decided to choose the lesser of two evils; and on May 9, when the plenipotentiaries again met, it was announced that the British Government agreed to Bernstorff's proposal. There was no further difficulty; and the Conference rose on May 11.

Thus in four days this gathering of Ambassadors and Foreign Ministers settled a question which had been troubling France and Prussia, and might have led in the long run to a general war.[1]

By a Treaty of London, signed on May 11, 1867, the ties between the House of Orange-Nassau and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg were maintained, together with the rights of succession possessed by the agnates, or collateral descendants, of the House of Nassau.

The Grand Duchy was declared to be a perpetually neutral State, "under the sanction of the collective guarantee of the Powers signing the Treaty," with the exception of Belgium, which was itself a neutral State.

It was agreed that, the Grand Duchy having been neutralised, the town of Luxembourg should cease to be a place of arms, that it should be evacuated by the Prussian garrison, and that the fortifications should be demolished by the Grand Duke immediately after the ratifications had been exchanged.

Hitherto the Duchy of Limburg (the territory on the right bank of the Meuse given to the Grand Duke William I as compensation for the part of Luxembourg assigned to Belgium) had been a Federal State represented at the Diet jointly with Luxembourg; but the Conference, recognising the changes resulting from the dissolution of the Germanic Confederation, declared that all relations had ceased between Luxembourg and Limburg, which was henceforth to form an integral part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands ("Holland").

In both Houses of Parliament the Cabinet were asked whether the Treaty bound Great Britain to interfere by force of arms in the event of an attack on Luxembourg. "The guarantee now given is," Stanley told the Commons, "collective only. It means this: that, in the event of a violation of neutrality,

[1] The plenipotentiaries were: Count Apponyi (Austria), M. Van de Weyer (Belgium), Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne (France), Marquis d'Azeglio (Italy), Count Bernstorff (Prussia), Baron Brunnow (Russia), Baron Bentinck, Baron de Ternaco, and M. Servais (the Netherlands and Luxembourg), Lord Stanley (Great Britain). Denmark, Portugal, and Spain wished to be represented, but they were not invited.

all the Powers who signed the Treaty may be called upon for their collective action. No one of those Powers is liable to be called upon to act singly or separately. It is a case, so to speak, of limited liability." It gave, he said, a right to make war, but did not impose any obligation. In the House of Lords the Duke of Argyll declared that this construction of the Treaty " reduced the whole thing to a sham, and a farce " ; and it is, indeed, difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Cabinet, having yielded against their will to the majority of the Conference, grasped at the word " collective " as a means for drawing a distinction between the obligations imposed by the Luxembourg Treaty and the Belgian Treaty of 1839. But this distinction was not in the minds of the other Powers when they agreed to the Conference and signed the Treaty ; and in Prussia it was said that the British Cabinet made it in order to avoid fulfilling their obligations to Luxembourg.[1]

The ratifications of the Treaty were exchanged in London on May 31, 1867 ; and Europe, with the question of Luxembourg disposed of, breathed freely for a time. The Great Exhibition in the summer of that year brought crowds to Paris. King William of Prussia was there, and with him Bismarck, who went about wondering, as he told Moritz Busch one evening at Versailles in 1870, whether he would have been in Paris or the French in Berlin if he had gone to war about Luxembourg, and von Moltke taking his " strategic walks " round the fortifications with an eye to the future. Paris was gay, brighter than ever, making holiday. Berlin, too, was outwardly peaceful ; but beneath the surface things were as they had been in the eighteenth century when the rest of Europe was keeping quiet, exhausted by the long war of the Spanish Succession. " In Prussia there was no repose, no leisure, but simply the tension of a tiger crouching for a spring."[2]

One consequence of the change in the international position of Luxembourg after the Treaty of London was the adoption of the present Constitution. The Grand Duchy is declared to

[1] Rothan, *L'Affaire du Luxembourg*, pp. 376–7, says that Baron Brunnow invented the distinction between a collective and an individual guarantee in order to overcome Lord Stanley's scruples. " C'était donner une apparente satisfaction au Cabinet de Berlin et permettre à lord Stanley de déclarer quelques jours après, en plein Parlement, au grand déplaisir de la Prusse, que la garantie qu'il avait donnée au nom de l'Angleterre ne l'engageait pas sérieusement." See also Sanger and Norton, *England's Guarantee to Belgium and Luxembourg* ; *The Great European Treaties of the Nineteenth Century* (edited by Sir Augustus Oakes), pp. 135, 258 ; and an article by Sir Ernest Satow in *The English Historical Review*, xxxiii. 411.

[2] Lord Acton, *Lectures on Modern History*, p. 290.

be an independent State, indivisible, inalienable, and perpetually neutral. The Crown is made hereditary in the House of Nassau. The Sovereign, who attains majority at the age of eighteen, must swear allegiance to the Laws and Constitution of the country, and exercise the executive authority through Ministers who are responsible to the Chamber, which consists of not fewer than one deputy for each 4,000 inhabitants, and is elected for six years. One half of the deputies retire and seek re-election after three years. The Grand Duke can dissolve the Chamber. He appoints a Council of State, which acts as an Upper House, and can suspend for six months any measure passed by the Representative Chamber. It is expressly declared that the deputies represent the country as a whole, and are expected to vote without regard to the private interests of their constituents. The local affairs of each commune are managed by an elected Communal Council and a Burgomaster appointed by the Grand Duke, who can suspend or annul any enactment of the communal authorities which exceeds their legal powers, or is thought contrary to the general interests of the country.

It will be observed that an important difference between the Constitutions of Luxembourg and Belgium is that, whereas in Belgium there is an elected Second Chamber, in Luxembourg measures carried in the Chamber are subject to the review of a Council nominated by the Crown. But the Constitution of the Grand Duchy contains most of the guarantees for liberty which are found in the Belgian Constitution, such as the equality of all persons in the eye of the law, religious toleration, the right to form associations, the right to petition the Crown, inviolability of the home, and freedom of the Press.

This fundamental code, which deprived the Grand Duke of the autocratic power which he had acquired in 1850, when the Federal Diet had so much influence in Luxembourg, came into force on October 17, 1868.

The Grand Duchy had been evacuated by the Prussian garrison soon after the Treaty of May 1867 was ratified ; the work of dismantling the fortress was finished in July 1870 ; and when the Franco-Prussian War began the only connection between Luxembourg and Germany was the Customs Union. France, however, was in control of the main railway system in virtue of an agreement between the Guillaume-Luxembourg Railway Company and the French Compagnie de l'Est, which had been concluded several years before, and was renewed at the beginning of 1869. The Prussian staff complained not

only that French soldiers travelled by these railways on their way to join the army, but also that the Compagnie de l'Est had used the Guillaume-Luxembourg line to carry supplies by night to the besieged town of Thionville. The people of Luxembourg were accused of assisting the French in other ways; and, indeed, they had never concealed their hostility to Prussia. Before 1867 the officers of the garrison had always behaved as if they were in a conquered country; and their arrogant conduct had made them so unpopular that in Luxembourg it was considered an insult to be called a Prussian. This antipathy was expressed in a line of the favourite song of the Luxembourgers: "Nous ne voulons pas être Prussiens."

In July 1870 the French Government had notified their intention to respect the neutrality of Luxembourg provided it was respected by Prussia; and Count Bismarck had made a corresponding declaration on behalf of the North German Confederation[1]; but on December 3 he issued a circular to the Powers asserting that Luxembourg was guilty of un-neutral conduct, and that Prussia was no longer bound by the Treaty of 1867.[2] The Grand Ducal Ministers and Chamber protested that they had done their best to fulfil their obligations under the Treaty, and that they were not responsible for the transit of supplies to Thionville. Lord Granville, who was then at the Foreign Office, suggested that the Powers who had given the guarantee of 1867 ought to be consulted before Prussian troops entered the Grand Duchy. Bismarck rejected this proposal; but, after some correspondence between the Powers, he instructed Count Bernstorff to inform Lord Granville that the neutrality of Luxembourg would not be violated. The question of the railways did not, however, end with that.

In May 1871, when peace was concluded between France and Prussia, an article of the Treaty of Frankfurt stated that the "German Government" (the Empire had been proclaimed at Versailles in January) would take up the rights and responsibilities of the Compagnie de l'Est in the Grand Duchy. The French Company was compelled to surrender its rights; and the remonstrances of Luxembourg were met by a threat that if this new arrangement was not agreed to Luxembourg would be excluded from the Customs Union, the rolling-stock would be removed, and all communications between the Grand Duchy and Germany by post or telegraph would be cut off. Luxembourg, though an independent State, was too small and weak

[1] Hertslet, *Map of Europe by Treaty*, iii, No. 142, p. 1877.
[2] Ibid., No. 432, p. 1901.

to resist the dictation of a mighty Empire; and in 1872 a Treaty was signed by which it was arranged that the railways were to be under German control till 1913. It was evident that they would be of great strategic value to an army coming from the Rhineland to invade the French mining district of Briey and attack Longwy or Verdun. But the apprehensions of the Luxembourgers were set at rest when the Imperial Government gave a solemn pledge that they would never be used for the transport of troops, or for any purpose incompatible with the neutrality of the Grand Duchy.[1]

After the war, though Prussia was more unpopular than ever with the people of Luxembourg, German influence increased at the Grand Ducal Court, and became paramount after William III died, in 1890, leaving no heir male.

He had been twice married, first to the Princess Sophia, daughter of the King of Württemberg, and secondly to the Princess Emma, daughter of the Prince of Waldeck-Pyrmont.[2] By his first wife, who died in 1877, he had two sons, William and Alexander, both of whom died unmarried, William in 1879, and Alexander in 1884. His second wife bore him a daughter, now Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, who was born on August 31, 1880, and would have been heiress-presumptive to the Grand Duchy on the death of Prince Alexander but for an arrangement by which, in 1783, the House of Nassau had fixed the succession to the family estates. Luxembourg having become one of these estates in 1815, when William I of the Netherlands received it in exchange for his possessions ceded to Prussia, the succession to the Grand Duchy fell to be settled by this arrangement, which provided that, on the failure of heirs male in the direct line, the estates should pass to the nearest male agnate of the Nassaus. In 1884, when

[1] "The German Government pledges itself never to use the Luxembourg railways for the transport of troops, arms, material of war and munitions, and never to avail themselves of them during a war in which Germany may be involved, for the provisioning of troops, in any way incompatible with the neutrality of the Grand Duchy, and, in general, not to commit, nor permit to be committed, any act in connection with the exploitation of the lines which is not in perfect accord with the duties incumbent on the Duchy as a neutral State" (Treaty of June 11, 1872, Article 2).

[2] "Queen Sophia was a very clever woman, and knew all the affairs of Europe better than most Ministers. In 1871, after the sacking of the Tuileries and the flight of the Empress from Paris, many public papers were stolen and published, and among them several letters from the Queen of Holland, giving the Emperor the best possible warning and advice as to the hostile intentions of Prussia and its military force; but they were laid aside and unheeded, like those of Stoffel, the military French Attaché at Berlin" (Malmesbury, *Memoirs of an ex-Minister*, p. 631, note (edition of 1885)).

William III lost his second son, and was left with no heir male, Adolph, Duke of Nassau-Weilburg, Prince Palatine of the Rhine, became heir-presumptive to the Grand Ducal Throne.[1]

Duke Adolph had taken the side of Austria in the war of 1866; and this cost him his Duchy of Nassau, which was annexed by Prussia. In 1884 he was living at Vienna, rich, but with no prospect of regaining his place among the ruling Sovereigns of Europe, when the death of Prince Alexander opened the succession to Luxembourg. His right to succeed was denied in Prussia, where it was claimed that those German Princes who were deposed in 1866 had forfeited their rights of succession, and that all these rights were now vested in the House of Hohenzollern. But, though learned professors, lawyers, and journalists pressed this for some time, Prince Bismarck, satisfied with the German Empire as he had established it, had no wish to annex Luxembourg; and in 1888, soon after his accession, the young Emperor William II, who had not yet cast off his father's Chancellor, acknowledged Duke Adolph as heir-apparent to the Grand Duchy.

In the following year William III was in such bad health that Queen Emma became Regent in the Netherlands, and Duke Adolph went to the Grand Duchy to be sworn in as Regent there. When he reached the station at Luxembourg, on April 11, 1889, he was met by a large crowd of his future subjects, who, when they saw him leave the train dressed as a Prussian officer, with the detested *pickelhaube* on his head, received him with cries of "Vive la France" and "Nous ne voulons pas être Prussiens." This was not a very "Joyeuse Entrée." The Regency, however, which began so badly, lasted for only three weeks, after which the King Grand Duke recovered. But there was a relapse; and a second Regency followed during which he died on November 23, 1890.[2]

After the accession of the Grand Duke Adolph the penetration of Luxembourg by Germany went on apace. German became the only language spoken at the Court, where all French and Belgian servants were dismissed. In the public

[1] Prince Henry, William III's only brother, had married the Princess Mary of Prussia in 1878, but died childless next year.

[2] He went down to the grave "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung," disliked by his Dutch subjects, and loathed by his relatives for his bad treatment of both his Queens. He generally lived alone at Loo, where everyone, Ministers and domestic servants alike, trembled before him. "D'ordinaire," Baron de Haulleville says, "il était rude, brutal même; on raconte qu'une heure avant sa mort il sacrait encore contre son valet de chambre." His widow, Queen Emma, used to go and pray at his tomb; and in Holland it was said that she really went there to thank Heaven that he was at last dead and buried.

service Luxembourgers were replaced, wherever it was possible, by German officials. In 1895 the Grand Duke commemorated the campaign of 1870 by entertaining a party of Prussian officers, who drank the toast of the next war and the final destruction of France with so much uproarious enthusiasm that the scene is still remembered in Luxembourg. In 1902, the agreement by which the railways came under German management, though it had still eleven more years to run, was renewed till 1959. The Grand Duke carried this new arrangement through in haste, without taking the advice of his Ministers, and without adequate discussion in the Chamber.

Three years later, in November 1905, the Grand Duke Adolph died. His only son, William, who succeeded him, had married the Infanta Marie Anne of Portugal. Of this marriage six daughters were born, but no son; and on the death of their father the male line of the Nassaus would be extinct. By the family compact of 1783 it was settled that in such a case the succession was to pass to the eldest daughter or to the nearest heiress of the last male. The succession to the throne of Luxembourg was thus provided for. The Grand Duke was, however, anxious that the rights of his children should be made absolutely secure; and in July 1907 the Chamber passed a law declaring that the eldest daughter, Marie Adelaide, was heiress-presumptive.[1]

Her Royal Highness Marie Adelaide had been born on June 14, 1894. She was, therefore, a minor when her father died on February 25, 1912; and her mother was Regent till she reached the age of eighteen in July, took the oath of fidelity to the Constitution, and made a speech to the Chamber in which she said; "Daughter of the Nassaus, I will be true to the famous motto of our family—'I will maintain.'"

The short reign of the Grand Duchess Marie Adelaide opened auspiciously. The people were proud of her. She was the fairest of her father's six fair daughters. In her veins ran the blood of two great Houses, Nassau and Braganza. She was a devout Catholic in a very Catholic country. In the Grand Duchy she was specially welcomed by her subjects because she had been born among them. In Paris a Te Deum was sung on the occasion of her accession by Luxembourgers who were living there. But there were some who had doubts

[1] Her right to succeed was disputed by the son of a morganatic marriage contracted by Prince Nicholas of Nassau; but, after some litigation, the Grand Ducal House bought off this claimant by settling on him an income of 40,000 marks.

about the fate of the dynasty and the destiny of Luxembourg. At the funeral of her father M. Eyschen, Minister of State, said to the Belgian General Deruette, who was there as representative of King Albert, that the inevitable future of the Grand Duchy was reunion to Belgium. This was the considered opinion of a statesman who had been many years in office. At that time, however, there seemed to be no reason why the Grand Duchy should not continue as it was, independent, peaceful, happy, and entitled to feel secure under the guarantee of 1867. An address presented to the Grand Duchess soon after her accession said: "Here in the midst of armed Europe the Grand Duchy blossoms like an oasis of peace"; and few of the Luxembourgers can have imagined on that summer day how soon there would be another summer day when, from the hills of the Eifel and the valley of the Moselle, their peaceful oasis was to be entered by armed men sent in by one of those very Powers on whom they relied for safety.

CHAPTER VIII

1914

In the early spring of 1914 the General Staff at Berlin had completed their preparations for the long-premeditated war, which was to begin by crushing France in four weeks, and finish by spreading German influence over all the world. The strategic railways leading to the frontier had been developing rapidly. Lines converging from Cologne, Bonn, and Coblenz led to Belgium. At some country stations in thinly populated districts small sidings, where a few coal-trucks used to stand, had been turned into long platforms for the use of troops. At Dalheim [1] there were ten of these platforms. The German Staff had indeed, as it was said, written their intentions in iron on the Belgian frontier. Near Malmédy, close to the frontier, a large concentration camp had been formed. For many years a swarm of spies had been at work. Most of these were Germans ostensibly employed in nothing except ordinary business; but others, the most dangerous type of spies, were natives of the country, who had served in the army, and were bribed to report on the fortresses.[2] Balloons passing over Antwerp had been found to carry Prussian officers in disguise, who were taking photographs of the fortifications. Concrete gun emplacements within range of Belgian towns and forts had been laid down, some under the pretence that they were tennis courts. In a harmless-looking factory near Antwerp the occupants, who came from beyond the Rhine, kept a store of materials for making a military bridge over the Schelde. Nothing had been forgotten. The huge guns, kept a profound secret, were ready to demolish the forts of Liége, Namur, and Antwerp. If the Belgian garrisons dared to open fire, poisonous gases had been prepared to supplement the destructive force of the heavy shells. The troops were equipped with special appliances for sacking and burning towns and villages if the civilian populations were even suspected of offences against

[1] On the Dutch Limburg frontier.

[2] In May 1907 four discharged soldiers were arrested at Brussels for alleged acts of this kind.

the invaders. There were motor-cars fitted with tanks from which petrol could be pumped on the buildings which were to be destroyed; and incendiary tablets, easily carried in the pocket, had been provided by the thousand. These were some of the methodical preparations of the General Staff at Berlin for carrying sword, fire, and terror into the small country which had honourably performed the duty laid on it by the public law of Europe. It only remained to find or invent some *casus belli*; and in June came the opportune murder of the Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo.

Though the drastic demands of the Austrian Note, made known to the Imperial Government at Berlin on or before July 18, and presented at Belgrade on July 23, had been almost wholly conceded, Austria, eagerly supported by the Emperor William, declared war on Serbia. Official information of this reached M. Davignon (Foreign Minister) at Brussels by telegram from the Belgian Minister at Vienna on July 28.

Already, on July 26, the Chief of the General Staff at Berlin had drawn up the ultimatum to Belgium demanding a free passage for the German army. On July 29 it was given to the Chancellor, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg. He revised it; and Herr von Jagow, the Secretary of State, sent it on at once that day by courier in a sealed envelope to Herr von Below-Saleske, the German Minister at Brussels, with instructions to keep it till he received further directions by telegram.[1]

The Belgian Cabinet, of course, knew nothing about this. But the text of the Austrian Note to Serbia, which reached Brussels the day after it was presented, had alarmed them; and when it became known that Austria was about to open hostilities which would inevitably involve her in a contest with Russia, and must therefore lead to war between France and Germany, it was decided to place the Belgian army on a footing preliminary to mobilisation should that become necessary.

This was on July 29, when the Emperor William, who had come back three days before from his voyage to Norway, held the decisive Council at Potsdam. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, on returning from Potsdam to Berlin that evening, asked Sir Edward Goschen, the British Ambassador, for the interview during which he made his "infamous proposal,"[2] that Great Britain should be neutral in a war between Germany and

[1] Kautsky, *Wie der Weltkrieg entstand, Dargestellt nach dem Aktenmaterial des Deutschen Auswärtigen Amts*, Berlin, 1919.

[2] Mr. Asquith in the House of Commons, August 6, *Hansard*, lxv. p. 2076.

France, and allow Germany, if victorious, to annex the French colonies. As to Belgium, the Chancellor said that what operations Germany might be "forced" to enter upon there would depend upon the "action of France," but that her integrity would be respected if she had not sided against Germany.[1] This was obviously a cunning attempt to hoodwink Great Britain as to the German plans. They did not depend in the very least on any action by France. There was no question of operations being forced on Germany. Everything was cut and dried. That very day Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg had been reading and revising the ultimatum to Belgium, which was already on its way to Brussels. Besides, he must have known that, while he was speaking to the British Ambassador, trains full of soldiers were approaching the Belgian frontier, that reservists had been ordered to report at Elsenborn near Malmédy, and that there was a great concentration of troops on the borders of Dutch Limburg, within a few hours' march through Aix-la-Chapelle to Visé and Liége.

When Sir Edward Goschen's telegram describing this interview reached London Sir Edward Grey replied that it would disgrace Great Britain for ever to make the proposed bargain at the expense of France. "The Chancellor," he added, "also in effect asks us to bargain away whatever obligations and interest we have as regards the neutrality of Belgium. We could not entertain that bargain either."[2]

During the next four days the crisis in the fate of Belgium moved quickly to its climax. On the evening of July 31 Baron van der Elst, Secretary of the Belgian Foreign Office, in the course of a conversation with the German Minister, reminded him of the declarations made in the Reichstag in 1911 that Germany would not violate Belgian neutrality, and received an assurance that the sentiments of the Imperial Government had not changed since then. But it is impossible to believe that Herr von Below-Saleske, even if he had not opened the sealed envelope containing the ultimatum, did not know that Belgium was to be invaded, and by this time the attitude of the Imperial Ministers in the negotiations between the Great Powers had made it certain that they were working for war. On that day, July 31, they closed their frontiers against trains from Belgium, proclaimed a state of danger of war throughout the German Empire, and, having just heard that Austria was willing to reopen negotiations with St. Petersburg,

[1] Sir Edward Goschen to Sir Edward Grey (Telegram), July 29.
[2] Sir Edward Grey to Sir Edward Goschen (Telegram) July 30, 1914.

sent their ultimatum to Russia, at the same time calling upon France to say, within eighteen hours, what her attitude would be in case of war between Germany and Russia; and they instructed Herr von Schön, their Ambassador at Paris, if the French Government said they would remain neutral, to demand, as a guarantee of their neutrality, the surrender of the fortresses of Toul and Verdun. That evening Count Lerchenfeld, the Bavarian Minister in Berlin, telephoned to his Government at Munich that the General Staff contemplated war against France with confidence, and counted on overthrowing the French in four weeks.

When the threatening news from Germany reached Brussels in the course of that day M. Klobukowski, the French Minister, made a point of telling M. Davignon that no French troops would enter Belgium, even if the Germans were massed upon the frontier. "France," he said, "does not wish to incur the responsibility, *vis-à-vis* with Belgium, of committing the first act of hostility."

At four o'clock that afternoon the Belgian Cabinet met, and ordered the mobilisation of the army. In the evening Sir Francis Villiers, the British Minister, informed M. Davignon that Sir Edward Grey had telegraphed to Paris and Berlin instructing the British Ambassadors to ask the French and German Governments if they would each of them respect the neutrality of Belgium provided no other Power violated it, and that Great Britain presumed that Belgium would do her utmost to maintain her neutrality. M. Davignon replied that Belgium would defend herself, and believed that her army was strong enough to offer an energetic resistance to any invasion.

The answer of the French Government was handed to Sir Francis Bertie, our Ambassador at Paris, late that night, and at once telegraphed to London. France, it said, would respect the neutrality of Belgium, and it would only be in the event of some other Power violating it that she might be forced to act otherwise in order to defend herself. Very different was the reply from Germany. It was necessary, Herr von Jagow told Sir Edward Goschen, to consult the Emperor and the Chancellor before he could possibly answer. He would not commit himself except to say that any reply they might give could not but disclose a certain amount of their plan of campaign, and that he was very doubtful whether they would return any answer at all.

In Belgium it has often been asked whether the Imperial

Government would not have drawn back if at this point Great Britain had openly declared that she would go to war against an attack on France and Russia, and in defence of Belgian neutrality. The French Ambassador at Berlin telegraphed to London that it was the uncertainty as to British intervention that encouraged the Imperial Government, and that a definite statement from Downing Street would decide Germany in favour of peace. This message was communicated to Sir Edward Grey ; but, though he had warned Prince Lichnowsky, German Ambassador at London, that no pledge of British neutrality in a war between France and Germany could be given, and had even gone so far as to say that Great Britain would be drawn in, all he was able to tell M. Paul Cambon was that up till then neither the British public nor the Cabinet felt that we were under any obligation to interfere. But he said that the preservation of Belgian neutrality might possibly decide the attitude of Great Britain.[1] Baron Beyens, who wrote to M. Davignon that with a little goodwill on the part of Berlin peace between Germany and Russia would have been preserved, did not believe that Great Britain could have prevented the catastrophe. "An ominous warning from Sir Edward Grey," he says, "would only have served to precipitate the onslaught of the Kaiser's armies, in order that the intervention of the British fleet might have no influence on the result of the campaign, the rapid and decisive campaign planned at Berlin."[2] Most fortunately, as the events of the next forty-eight hours were to show, the British fleet had been already sent quietly to its appointed war stations by Mr. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Prince Louis of Battenberg, the First Sea Lord, on their own initiative without waiting for instructions from the Cabinet.[3]

On August 1 the British Cabinet met. The French and German answers were laid before them. What France would say had of course been known from the first ; the inquiry had been addressed to her *pro formâ*. The German reply, however, required very serious consideration. To the last Sir Edward Grey had hoped, as Prince Lichnowsky perceived and afterwards said in his narrative of his mission to London, that peace would somehow be preserved. But now the position was that, whereas France had confirmed her previous declarations, Germany had not only declined to promise that she would

[1] Sir Edward Grey to Sir Francis Bertie, July 31, 1914.
[2] Beyens, *Germany before the War* (English Edition), p. 309.
[3] But with the knowledge and approval of the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith.

respect the neutrality of Belgium, but had used words which scarcely veiled her intention to carry out that plan of campaign which must bring Great Britain into the field in fulfilment of her treaty obligations to Belgium and her moral obligations to France. Yet even then Sir Edward Grey's hands were tied. The dissensions in the Cabinet made definite action impossible. Some of the Ministers were against intervention, even though non-intervention meant the sacrifice of Belgium; and at least one London paper was in favour of giving Germany a free hand. "Within a few days of England launching into this struggle," it prophesied that morning, "the streets of every English town will be filled with starving men and women and children, who either have no money because there is no work, or whose wages under the blast of famine can no longer keep body and soul together"; and this appeal to fear was accompanied by a long article which denied that we had any obligations "except the obligation to preserve this country from any share in the crime which threatens to overwhelm Europe," held Russia and Serbia responsible for the crisis, and pleaded eloquently in praise of German civilisation, "the most enlightened intellectual life of the modern world."

A telegram from Count de Lalaing, Belgian Minister at London, informed M. Davignon of the French answer; and on the morning of Sunday, August 2, he spoke about it to Herr von Below-Saleske, and warned him that it would be made public in the newspapers. The German Minister replied that he had not been instructed to make any official statement, but said once more that in his personal opinion Belgium was safe.[1] Almost immediately, however, news arrived that early that morning German troops had violated the neutrality of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. This was indeed alarming. Only two days before the Grand Ducal Minister at Brussels had told M. Davignon how the German Government had given Luxembourg an assurance that her neutrality would be respected; and now the Grand Duchy had been entered without any warning. This naturally caused anxiety at the Foreign Office in Brussels, where it was feared that the German plans for invading Belgium, revealed to the Chambers at the secret session of the year before, might suddenly be carried out. But it seemed incredible that this could happen after what

[1] He said this when the Ultimatum was lying at the German Legation ready to be presented; but it is always possible to believe that he waited for the promised telegram from Berlin before opening the sealed envelope in which the courier brought it to him on July 29.

Herr von Below-Saleske had said; and the latter followed up his soothing words to M. Davignon by telling M. de Rudder, one of the staff of *Le Soir*, that the Belgians had no cause to be alarmed. Their neighbour's roof might be burning, he said, but their house would not be set on fire.[1] Further assurances of goodwill were given by the German Military Attaché, Captain Brinkmann, who called up another paper, *Le XXme Siècle*, and telephoned an urgent request for the publication of a denial that Germany had declared war on either Russia or France.[2] "How about German troops entering the Grand Duchy?" the editor, M. Neuray, asked. The Attaché replied that he knew nothing about that; some patrol might have made a mistake; the Grand Ducal railways were German; precautions might have been taken; but there was nothing in that to agitate the Belgians. Special editions of the two papers were forthwith issued; and public confidence, somewhat shaken by rumours in the morning, was restored. A number of Germans were leaving Brussels by train, and the railway officials, at the request of Herr von Below-Saleske, who again said they might fully trust Germany, gave special facilities to those who were going to join the army. So complete was the general feeling of security that the Belgian soldiers, many of whom travelled in company with the Germans, started in the full belief that they had been mobilised for nothing more serious than the easy duty of watching the frontiers of their neutral country.[3]

All that day Brussels remained calm. There was no suspicion amongst the general public that the most momentous hour in the history of the young Belgian Kingdom was about to strike. The people of Herculaneum and Pompeii could not have felt more secure on the eve of the eruption.[4] But Herr von Below-Saleske received the telegram from Berlin; and at seven o'clock, when the Sunday crowds, out for their weekly holiday, were strolling happily down the Avenue Louise, after

[1] "Peut-être que le toit de vos voisins brûlera, mais votre maison restera sauve."

[2] Germany had declared waron Rus sia at 7.10 p.m. the night before; war on France was not declared till next evening, Monday, Aug ust 3.

[3] A correspondent of the *Kölnische Zeitung* mentioned this in his paper next morning.

[4] There had been a good deal of excitement in Brussels since the Austrian declaration of war. The Bourse was closed; the town was under martial law; a French Socialist leader addressed a large crowd in the Grande Place; but, though the Government and the Staffs of various Legations knew how critical the situation was, the populace did not believe, even after the order for mobilisation, that Belgium was really in any danger.

a day of amusement in the Bois de la Cambre, or sitting outside the restaurants and taverns on the Boulevard Anspach, he went to the Rue de la Loi, and entered the Foreign Office with the Note demanding a free passage for the German army, on the pretext that the Imperial Government had received authentic information[1] that French forces intended to march on the line of the Meuse by Givet and Namur. If Belgium showed friendly neutrality to Germany her territory would be evacuated and her independence guaranteed at the end of the war; but if Belgium resisted she would be treated as an enemy. Having presented this atrocious ultimatum to M. Davignon, Herr von Below-Saleske announced that he must have an answer in twelve hours. There was nothing more to be said. M. Davignon refused the hand of the German Minister, who left the room, looking, it seemed to one who saw him pass out, thoroughly ashamed of himself.[2]

Few diplomatic papers have been more closely examined than the German ultimatum to Belgium. There is, however, one cardinal fact to which attention may once more be called in passing. No authentic information that the French intended to march from Givet on the line of the Meuse could possibly have been received by the Imperial Government. It was the 148th Regiment, forming part of the 8th Brigade, commanded by General Mangin, which was at Givet. Strict orders not to cross the Belgian frontiers were issued. On August 4 the outposts were extended, but not farther than the Customs House on the French side of the frontier. Only on August 6, three days after Germany declared war, were orders given to hold the Meuse from Givet to Dinant. The General Staff, whose Intelligence Department was at that time remarkably well served, must have known the exact situation at Givet; and, moreover, they knew on August 2 that France had answered the British inquiry by undertaking not to enter Belgium till some other Power had violated her neutrality. Some plausible excuse had to be found for the flagrant breach of faith which the German plan of campaign involved; and the statement about informa-

[1] *Zuverlässige Nachrichten*, absolutely reliable and trustworthy news.

[2] The Note, drawn up by the General Staff and handed to the F.O. at Berlin for approval, said that authentic news of a British as well as a French advance had reached the Imperial Government. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, however, evidently saw that this was going too far. He struck out the assertion about Great Britain, and sent it to Brussels in the form in which it was presented. When the courier left Berlin on July 29 the instructions to Herr von Below-Saleske were to demand an answer in twenty-four hours; but on August 2 he was directed to limit the time to twelve hours, so that the Belgian Cabinet would have only that night in which to make up their minds.

tion of French intentions was accordingly made in the Ultimatum. When Herr von Jagow telegraphed to Herr von Below-Saleske on August 2 telling him to present the Ultimatum, he said that the Belgian Government must be led to think that both the Ultimatum and the instructions to present it had been telegraphed to Brussels at the same time on that day. This was obviously to create the impression that the alleged information about the French had just been received. Accordingly the Note left with M. Davignon bore the date of August 2, though the truth was that it had been prepared on July 26, and was in the German Legation at Brussels for some days before it was presented.[1]

Soon after the German Minister had left the Foreign Office King Albert and his Council of State assembled at the Palace. Consultations there and at the Foreign Office went on all night. In the end the well-known answer was unanimously adopted, declaring that to accept the German proposal would be to sacrifice the honour of Belgium and betray her duty to Europe. The Belgian Ministers said that, conscious of the part which their country had played for more than eighty years, they refused to believe that its independence could be preserved only by the violation of its neutrality. "If this hope is disappointed, the Belgian Government are firmly resolved to repel, by all means in their power, every attack upon their rights." At seven in the morning this spirited manifesto was carried by Baron de Gaiffier, Political Director of the Foreign Office, to the German Legation and placed in the hands of Herr von Below-Saleske, who received it with an air of cool indifference, asked the Belgian envoy if he had anything more to say, and bowed him out.[2]

[1] The deception was kept up in the Second *German White Book* (April 1915) where the Note with the Ultimatum appeared in the form of a telegram despatched from Berlin on August 2.

[2] The German Government did not allow the Note, with the Ultimatum to Belgium, to be made public till August 8; and when it was then published, by the official Wolff News Agency, not only was the Belgian answer suppressed, but it was actually stated that there had been no answer! The words "Auf diese Note erfolgte keine Antwort" were appended to the text of the Note. As to this see Passelecq, *Essai critique et Notes*, p. 60. The Belgian answer will be found in the first Grey Book, No. 22. Minute descriptions of what passed during the night of Aug. 2–3 will be found in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for February 1916, pp. 884–906. (An article on "La Nuit du 2 Août 1914, au Ministère des Affaires Étrangères de Belgique," by A. de Bassompierre) and in Professor Van der Essens' *L'Invasion Allemande en Belgique*, pp. 36–40. In the First Grey Book, No. 21, there is a memorandum of the curious interview with Baron Van der Elst asked for, at 1.30 a.m., by Herr von Below-Saleske, who rushed to the Foreign Office with what he called "an urgent communication" about French bombs having been thrown on German territory before any de-

At noon M. Klobukowski went to the Foreign Office and told M. Davignon that, though he was without instructions, he felt justified in saying that if an appeal were made to France, she would at once come to the support of Belgium. But, as no act of hostility had so far occurred, the Belgian Government had decided that the time had not yet come to ask the guaranteeing Powers for military help. News of the German demand was communicated to Count de Lalaing in a telegram which he showed to Sir Edward Grey, who laid it before the Cabinet; and the Belgian Minister was soon able to telegraph to M. Davignon the welcome news: "The Minister for Foreign Affairs has informed me that if our neutrality is violated it means war with Germany." A telegram was about the same time sent from King Albert to King George asking for the diplomatic intervention of the British Government to safeguard the neutrality of Belgium. It reached London while the Cabinet were sitting, and was read to the House of Commons that afternoon by Sir Edward Grey, who went into the Belgian question, quoted Mr. Gladstone's opinions in 1870, and said that the only means by which the Government could make certain of keeping outside the war would be by issuing a proclamation of unconditional neutrality. But that was impossible. If we stood aside, and abandoned France and Belgium, we would, he said, "sacrifice our respect and good name and reputation before the world." [1]

At six next morning, August 4, M. Davignon received a Note from Herr von Below-Saleske intimating that the German army was about to force an entrance into Belgium. The Chambers were to meet in a few hours. The deputies had been summoned by telegram; and those who came from districts near the frontier beyond the Meuse heard on their way loud explosions caused by the destruction of bridges and tunnels, which the engineers were blowing up to delay the advance of the enemy, and saw flames rising from farms which had to be burned to the ground lest they should obstruct the line of fire. This meant war. Eighty-three years had passed since, on the morning of August 2, 1831, the Dutch entered Belgium, forced their way almost to Brussels in ten days, but retired on the arrival of a French army sent to oppose them. There could

claration of war. This and other fantastic tales of the same kind are proved to have been mere fabrications in *Le Mensonge du 3 Août* 1914, one of the most useful French publications on the incidents immediately preceding the war.

[1] *Hansard*, lxv. 2073

be no such speedy deliverance now. But there were no signs of fear among the people ; and the streets rang with enthusiastic cheers when King Albert, preceded by the Queen and their children, rode through the crowd to the Palais de la Nation, where he made a speech full of courage and hope. Party feeling was forgotten. The Catholics and the Liberals, the Socialists, the Flemings and the Walloons, were united in presence of the common danger.[1] How close at hand the danger was could be seen when news came that the frontier had been crossed at Gemmenich near Aix-la-Chapelle at half-past nine that morning.

That afternoon, when the German army, having crossed the frontier at several points, was marching on Liége, the Cabinet of Brussels, who had waited to the last possible moment, appealed to Great Britain, France, and Russia to co-operate as guaranteeing Powers in the defence of Belgium ; and a telegram from Count de Lalaing told them that in the House of Commons the Prime Minister had said that the Government had repeated their request to Germany for the assurance as to Belgian neutrality already given by France, and had instructed the British Ambassador at Berlin to demand a reply before midnight. What happened when Sir Edward Goschen presented this Ultimatum is a thrice-told tale ; the mendacious answer of Herr von Jagow that the safety of the Empire made it necessary that the Imperial troops should advance through Belgium ; Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg's scornful allusion to the " scrap of paper " ; and the blunt saying of Herr von Zimmermann, the Under-Secretary of State, that the assurance required by Great Britain could not possibly be given either that night or any other night. On the following afternoon, August 5, it was announced at Westminster that our Ambassador at Berlin had received his passports, and that Great Britain and the German Empire were at war.

The conduct of the Belgian, British, and French Governments had been punctiliously correct. Belgium first appealed to Great Britain for diplomatic intervention. That was tried and failed. Then, and not till then, did the Belgian Government ask for and receive military assistance. It was the same between France and Belgium. On July 30 the French Government gave orders that their troops should keep at a distance of ten kilometres from the frontiers ; and after that three successive orders forbade any move, even of single scouts, into Belgium or Germany. It was not till August 5, after the

[1] M. Vandervelde, the Socialist leader, became a Minister of State.

Germans had entered, that French aeroplanes were allowed to reconnoitre over Belgian territory, and that patrols advanced across the border.

On August 5 King Albert went to the front as Commander-in-Chief. It was a hopeless struggle from the first. The Belgian army, numbering in all less than 100,000 men for the firing-line, was only about 10,000 stronger than at the time of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Its equipment was defective. German firms, notably that of Krupp, had kept back guns and munitions which had been ordered; and so many rifles were awanting that they had to be obtained from France after the war began. It was in vain that a small force less than 30,000 strong, all that could be spared for the defence of Liége, full of zeal, but without experience, fought against the magnificent host of highly-trained professional soldiers who advanced in overwhelming numbers. The Germans were held back and suffered heavy losses for a time; but the town of Liége was entered on August 7. The forts held out for a week longer, but were demolished by the overpowering fire of the heavy artillery; and General Leman's heroic defence came to an end when Fort Loncin was blown up on August 15.[1] Thus the fragile barrier was broken down, and the way lay open through Belgian Limburg and Brabant into the Flemish plain. The entry of the Germans into Brussels; the sudden and unexpected fall of Namur; the combats in the open country between Liége and Antwerp; the destruction of Dinant; the retirement into Antwerp; the departure of the main body of the Belgian army and the Government; the wild panic and flight of the inhabitants; the continued defence by an Anglo-Belgian force; the bombardment of the city; the final evacuation; and the retreat to the Yser—all these events are described in every history of the war.

The outstanding fact to remember in connection with the Belgian operations is their value to the Allies in the West. When the Imperial armies were overrunning Belgium far and wide, Major Spohr, a German officer, boasted in the official *Deutsche Krieger Zeitung* that the plan of invasion had been ready for a long time, and was being carried out to perfection. But on the night of August 4 Herr von Jagow told Sir Edward

[1] When at Maastricht soon after the Armistice, the writer was told by a most trustworthy informant that on August 7, 1914 secret orders were given to German civilian officials on the frontier to prepare for the passage of a large force across Dutch Limburg to the bridges at Maastricht and Maeseyck, leading to the Belgian side of the Meuse; and this violation of the neutrality of Holland would probably have taken place if Liége had barred the way much longer.

Goschen that an advance into France by the easiest and quickest route, so as to strike a decisive blow as early as possible, was the plan of the Imperial Government; and the resistance of Belgium prevented the full success of this plan. Owing to the grievous error of those who had opposed the reorganisation of the army till it was too late, the Belgian effort was not so prolonged and vigorous as it might have been. It gave, however, priceless assistance to Great Britain and France. The chief contribution of Great Britain to the general war was of course understood to be the fleet. That the British Islands and the Dominions would put millions of armed men into the field was not foreseen. Great Britain's own existence, her very life, depended on the fleet; and it was the weapon which ultimately exhausted the economic and military resources of the German Empire, and thereby, not for the first time in history, saved Europe and the world from the supremacy of one Power. It was waiting, ready for immediate service, before the war began. But the Expeditionary Force, which was meant to supplement the French army, had to be transported across the Channel; and if the German armies had been allowed to press on as fast as the General Staff at Berlin intended, the situation of the first instalment from England would have been even more critical than it was. It is, indeed, possible that the Channel ports would have been closed against a landing. And if the enemy had not been delayed the French might have been unable to rearrange their line, and execute the manœuvres which prepared the way for the French and British victories on the Marne and Aisne.

On the evening of October 14 the exhausted Belgian army reached the line of the Yser, where they turned to bay, and, with the help of French reinforcements, held their shallow trenches against the repeated attacks of the army led by the Duke of Württemberg, while to the south the British were fighting fearful odds at Ypres. A bloody battle raged for some days. When the Germans were launching furious assaults on the advanced post at the village of Lombaertzyde, British warships suddenly appeared at sea, and opened fire with such effect that the enemy were forced to retreat. Then the dykes were cut, and the low-lying fields between the Yser and the railway from Nieuport to Dixmude became a lake of mud and water through which no troops could advance; and on November 1 the enemy abandoned the attack. The Belgians had suffered heavily. Nieuport and Dixmude were in ruins. But a corner of West Flanders remained unconquered.

CHAPTER IX

THE OCCUPATION OF BELGIUM

General von Bissing, Governor of Belgium during a part of the occupation, paid a high compliment to King Albert when, quoting Machiavelli to justify the suggestion, he hinted that it might be necessary to have him killed. The assassination of the King of the Belgians would only have added one more to the crimes of which the Emperor William and the Prussian Staff were guilty; and it would have removed the man who, above all others, had roused the spirit of resistance in the Belgian people on the first day of the war, and whose presence in the still unconquered part of Belgium did much to keep hope alive throughout the whole country.

Before the war the Belgian Government was composed of Catholics only; but on the outbreak of war the leaders of the other parties took office, M. Hymans for the Liberals, and M. Vandervelde for the Socialists. They all went to France on October 13, during the retreat to the Yser, and remained at Havre till November 1918, attending to the reorganisation of the army, co-operating with Mr. Hoover and the Commission for the Relief of Belgium, arranging loans, and fulfilling other civil functions. King Albert never went to Havre. Close to the French frontier a cluster of cottages had nestled from time immemorial in a hollow among the dunes at a little distance from the sea. This was the fishing village of La Panne. It was seldom visited except by wandering artists. But some years before the war villas were built nearer the shore, roads were made, and soon there was another of the watering-places which rose, as if by magic, on the coast of Flanders in the reign of Leopold II. Here, not far from the spot at which his grandfather had first entered Belgium when he came from England on his accession, King Albert lived with Queen Elizabeth in a small villa which was often under fire of the guns which were shelling Dunkirk from positions to the east of Lombaertzyde. The fighting line, running from near Dixmude through Pervyse and Nieuport to the sea, was not far off; and King Albert was

constantly there. The Queen was generally nursing the wounded; but she, too, sometimes exposed herself fearlessly to danger in the trenches.

In the part of Belgium where the King still ruled *de facto*, as well as *de jure*, Ypres, Nieuport, and Furnes were the chief towns. All the world knows the fate of Ypres, the scene of so much bloodshed in the distant past and in these later years.[1] Nieuport had been battered into a mass of ruins. Furnes had not been seriously damaged, but most of the inhabitants had fled. The whole Kingdom of Belgium outside the district in which these towns stood was now under German rule.

The first Governor-General appointed by the Emperor was Baron von der Goltz, who hoisted the German flag on the Palais de la Nation at Brussels on September 1, 1914. In December he was replaced by General von Bissing. The system which they set up was not inconsistent with the Hague Conventions relating to the administration of occupied territory; but though it read well on paper, the organisation became in practice an instrument of oppression. The Dutch frontier from the sea to the Meuse was closed by a double line of wire charged with an electric current, on which several persons were electrocuted. Anyone found trying to escape was shot at sight.[2] Thus Belgium was a prison; and the hatred of the prisoners against those who kept them in bondage was increased by thoughts of the atrocities committed by the Imperial armies in the early days of the war. The sack of Louvain; the ruthless massacres at Dinant and other places; the murder of non-combatants, old men, women, and children; the shooting of priests and hostages; the burning of churches; the wholesale plundering, and wanton destruction of private property—these were crimes so notorious that no reports by committees of inquiry were needed in order to prove them to Belgians on the spot. They knew.[3]

[1] The evolution of Ypres from a feudal tower on an island till it became a great fortress can be traced in a very interesting volume of maps and plans published in 1858, as a supplement to M. Vereecke's *Histoire Militaire d' Ypres*. They show the first defences, those erected by Vauban, the fortifications from 1794 to 1814, and what the English engineers did in 1815. Most of the fortifications were removed in 1852.

[2] In *Les Évasions de Belgique*, a volume published by Perrin & Co. of Paris in 1918, a number of those who escaped into Holland describe their adventures.

[3] The Imperial Government, it will be remembered, defended all the outrages as legitimate reprisals on the civilian population for attacking German troops in violation of International Law. The well-known German *White Book* of May 1915 set forth the accusations against the civilians. The Reply of the Belgian Government was published in French in Paris in 1916, and in English

Instead of trying to obliterate the memory of these horrors, the Government were so insane as to commit from time to time those acts which, like the sinking of the *Lusitania*, excited the indignation of the world, and caused fresh hatred among the population of Belgium; acts such as the cold-blooded murder of Captain Fryatt, and the cruel executions of Edith Cavell and Gabrielle Petit, the young and beautiful girl who would not let her eyes be bandaged, but looked the Prussian officer in the face, and said, "I will show you how a Belgian woman can die." The only excuse, a very poor one, for much that was done in Belgium is that the heavy drinking in which many officers and men indulged had made them hardly responsible for their actions. There might almost be said of them what Charles II said of his Ministers in Scotland, that their acts were the acts of "madmen, or men who are continually drunk." [1]

General von Bissing and his colleagues were tireless in their efforts to break down the spirit of the population, who were exasperated, not only by the cruelties they had to endure, but also by petty interferences with their private lives which were intensely irritating to people like the Belgians, who prize individual liberty above all things. Newspapers were distributed in which Great Britain was accused of sacrificing Belgium to her ambitions. The falsehood that the Belgian Ministers had betrayed the neutrality of the country before the war was spread far and wide. King Albert was abused. Even the Queen was not spared. The glaring fact that Germany had violated Belgian neutrality was ignored; and the British blockade was said to be the cause of all the privations from which the country was suffering. Every day in every town

in London, by the Stationery Office, in 1918. It states and examines the German accusations at full length, and is of more historical value than the Report of the British Commission, with the Evidence and Documents which appeared in 1915. Even if it is admitted that individual civilians did, at least in the first ten days of the war, sometimes use arms against the invaders, that very International Law to which the Imperial Government appealed did not sanction the indiscriminate killings, burnings, plunderings, and other acts of violence which the Imperial armies are clearly proved to have committed by order on the principle of "collective responsibility."

[1] The orgies that went on in the country districts are well known. But even in Brussels, under the eyes of the neutral Diplomatic Corps, things were nearly as bad. In November 1918, a few hours after the last of the Germans had left, the writer was at the Foreign Office with one of the late M. Davignon's sons. They found the room in which the Ultimatum was presented on August 2, 1914 in fairly good order; but in another room bottles of burgundy, champagne, port, Rhine wine, some empty and some half full, were lying about. There were pools of wine on the floor and tables and other signs of a prolonged debauch.

and village placards were put up giving "Official News of the War" intended to destroy all hopes of deliverance. But this ceaseless propaganda was met by papers secretly printed in French and Flemish, which were widely read in spite of all efforts to suppress them. "Let us wait," said one of them, "with patience and dignity. Victory is certain. We have a hundred times more reason than the Kaiser to say 'Gott mit uns.'" Pictures of the King and Queen, of Cardinal Mercier and the famous Burgomaster Max, were on the walls even of the humblest houses; and on one occasion, in the church of Ste Gudule, after a sermon by Cardinal Mercier, the congregation rose, sang the "Brabançonne," though German officers were present, and shouted "Long live the King! Long live the Queen!" This was on the anniversary of independence, celebrations of which had been forbidden by the Government; and it was with the object of ultimately ending Belgian independence that General von Bissing took up the "Flemish Movement" as a means for causing disunion, and thus preparing the way for the incorporation of Belgium in the German Empire.

The Flemish Movement had been caused by the fact that, though Belgium was bi-lingual, a majority of the people spoke Flemish as their usual language. French was the language of the upper classes and of the official world; and the Flemings complained that this put them in an inferior position, and kept them back if they were in public employments. The agitation for a fuller recognition of the Flemish tongue began to be insistent about ten years after the Kingdom of the Netherlands was dissolved. It was at first an intellectual movement in the interest of Flemish literature. Then it became political; and some of the Walloon deputies in the Chambers helped the Flemings to obtain the removal of various grievances of which they complained, until at last the equality of the two languages was officially recognised.

When the war began the chief complaint of the "Flamingants" was the want of a Flemish University. In Belgium there were two State Universities, at Ghent and Liége, both of which were French. Just before the invasion a project was brought into the Chambers for making the University of Ghent purely Flemish; and, moreover, some of the Flamingants had been speaking about an administrative separation of the Flemish from the Walloon districts. These facts were well known to the German Government; and General von Bissing, in concert with the Ministers at Berlin, tried to use them so as

to divide the Flemings from the Walloons, and thus destroy the unity of the Belgian Kingdom. He established the Flemish University at Ghent. He proclaimed the administrative separation with a Flemish Government at Brussels and a Walloon Government at Namur. And in this work he was assisted by the "Activists." The Activists, who were only a minority of the Flamingants, held that the Flemish Movement would be ruined if it was allowed to lie passive during the occupation, and that it was good policy to accept help from the German Government. Some of them wished to separate entirely from the Walloons, and incorporate Flanders in the German Empire. Some did not go so far, but were in favour of self-government for Flanders within the Kingdom. Others only desired to use the authority of the German Government to establish the Flemish University at Ghent. The vast majority, however, of the Flemings refused to follow the Activists; and when, in January 1918, the extreme party actually declared Flanders independent there was a popular uprising against them, especially in the Flemish city of Antwerp.[1]

Meanwhile an Activist and German propaganda had been working on the Yser. At first the distinction between Flemings and Walloons had been forgotten by the Belgians at the front. They felt that they were simply soldiers enduring hardships for their native land, Flanders and Wallonia alike. But, though they were in daily peril of their lives, their duties became monotonous. While the British and the French were attacking the enemy from time to time, fighting great battles, and excited by the fearful risks of war, the Belgians were on the defensive in their trenches; and as the struggle went on, lasting far longer than had been expected, lassitude, discouragement, sometimes even despair, began to appear. Among the Flemings, who were a majority of the rank and file, complaints were heard. It was said that most of the officers were Walloons; that they always gave their orders in French; that they put the Flemings in posts of danger, and kept the Walloons behind the firing line; that when Flemings were accused of offences they were tried and punished by officers who did not understand their language; that there was no

[1] General von Bissing had died in April 1917. He was succeeded by General von Falkenhausen. The Activist movement began at Ghent in October 1914, under the guidance of a delegate from the Pan-German League, when an Association was formed with a programme which included the suppression bf the French language and the name of Belgium, the complote separation of the Flemish from the Walloon provinces, and the annexation of Flanders by Germany.

book of regulations written in Flemish; that, however good a soldier a Fleming might be, he was seldom rewarded by promotion. "It is unhappy and disheartening to serve in our army when one is a Fleming," a soldier wrote, "because there is so much inequality between us and the Walloons." [1]

This state of things suggested to the German Command that the discipline of the Flemings might be undermined; and, with the help of certain Activists, elaborate plans were devised for tampering with the Belgian army.[2] In Germany care was taken to separate the Flemish from the Walloon prisoners. Passes were issued to some of them, allowing them to go from place to place, on the understanding that when writing home they would give a favourable account of the treatment they were receiving. Leave to go back to Belgium was offered on condition that they would work for German interests amongst their countrymen. Some gave way, and went over to the side of the enemy; but the vast majority refused to yield. In one letter a prisoner writes to his wife that there must be "no discord in our little Belgium," but that, on the contrary, there must be fraternity between Flemings and Walloons. "I am," he says, "both a Fleming and a Belgian." Another writes, "I cannot come home. You will love me all the better afterwards, because I have not been a traitor, but have done my duty as a soldier." And pathetic letters went from Belgium, in which wives and mothers implored their husbands and sons to stand firm, and refuse to accept favours. "We long to have you with us," a wife writes, "but not unless you come back as a soldier who can hold up his head because he has done nothing to be ashamed of." This was the prevailing sentiment. But the "Council of Flanders," a notorious association which sent delegates to Berlin, and formed an unholy alliance with the Chancellor, stirred up dissatisfaction among some of the Flemings on the Yser; and in the summer of 1918, at the time of the great German advance, there were desertions, and a plot was formed to let the enemy through and bring about the capture of the Belgian army. On May 12 M. Borms, a prominent Activist, addressed a meeting at Cologne.

[1] Van de Perre, *The Language Question in Belgium*, p. 218.

[2] *Un Livre Noir de la Trahison Activiste*, by "Rudiger," gives a minute account of the treasonable plot of the Activists, and their collusion with the German authorities. It was published at Brussels in 1921, and contains an interesting collection of hitherto unpublished documents. The author is a Fleming, though he writes in French. "Puisse," he says, "mon humble et ingrat travail contribuer à délivrer la cause Flamande d'individus qui la déshonorent!"

"We wish," he said, "only one thing, which is that the victorious German army may break through, separate our Belgian army from the Allies, and save Flanders. We know this is the desire of the Belgian soldiers. We hope that the German frontier will extend to Dunkirk. We will undertake to make Germanism safe on the North Sea, the Schelde, and the Meuse."

The most painful feature of the situation at this period of the war was a movement which had been in progress for some time at the Belgian front side by side with the operations of the Activists in the occupied part of the country. The Flemish question had been discussed in the trenches and camps by Flemings who had been students at the Universities when the war began; and some of the young soldiers fell a prey to the insidious propaganda against the Belgian State which was being carried on unceasingly by the enemy and the more virulent of the Activists. When soldiers begin to talk politics there is always a risk of danger to the State they serve; and when the Flemings on the Yser formed debating Clubs, and made speeches on the Flemish question, they very naturally talked about the history of Flanders, about how often in the Middle Ages their ancestors had fought against the French, and how they won the battle of the Golden Spurs, that famous fight in which the hardy peasantry of Flanders overthrew the Knights of France whom Philip the Fair had sent to avenge the blood of those who had been slaughtered on the terrible morning of the Bruges Matins, when the Flemings shouted in their native tongue "Schilt en de Vriendt," [1] and when every man who could not pronounce these words was known to be a Frenchman and put to the sword without mercy. Dwelling on the story of these days, they came to think of France as the hereditary foe of Flanders, and even went so far as to claim a right to refuse obedience to orders which their officers gave in French. At last they held secret meetings, entered into close relations with the Activist leaders, and actually addressed letters to the King full of complaints against their commanders, and demanding a separate Government for Flanders, with the division of the Belgian forces into Flemish and Walloon armies.

In the summer of 1918 the German and Activist propaganda on the Yser was intense, and leaflets full of attacks on the Belgian Government and the Allies found their way into the trenches. "Choose," one of them said, "between your own interest and that of the enemy. To go on fighting for Belgium is to fight against Flanders and yourselves."

[1] Shield and friend.

In another leaflet were the words—"Would you save Flanders? Then leave the field of battle, and go home to your Flemish brethren, shouting 'Up with Flanders! Death to the Le Havre Ministers!'" And yet another attacked the Allies in language evidently inspired by the propaganda department of the Kriegsministerium at Berlin. "England, the robber and oppressor of small peoples, the murderer of the Boers and the Irish, and of our mothers and children, the ignoble cause of strife, who drove Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania into the war, and has deserted them like a coward, still clings to her design of conquering the German colonies. France, who attacked us constantly throughout our history, destroyed our towns, and stole a great part of our territory,[1] is bent on taking possession of German Alsace-Lorraine, stolen from Germany in the seventeenth century by the French King Louis XIV."

These writings were, it is obvious, by a German hand, though ostensibly they were by Flemings; and at the Imperial Head-Quarters General Ludendorff said he was satisfied with the results of his propaganda, having been told by deserters from the Yser that the Belgian army was no longer so hostile to Germany as it had been when the war began.[2]

So long as there were hopes of a German victory the Activists were busy; and their intrigues caused serious alarm at Le Havre. During the war there had been several changes there. M. de Broqueville, however, was Prime Minister till June 1918, when he was succeeded by M. Cooreman, formerly President of the Chamber of Deputies, who formed a new Administration, in which the Minister of Foreign Affairs was M. Hymans, who, with the Socialist leader, M. Vandervelde, had joined the Catholic Government at the crisis of August 1914.[3] The comments of German papers on this change of Ministers was significant. The Government of M. de Broqueville, guilty of refusing a passage to the Imperial army when war began, was the first of the Entente Governments to be swept away by the might of the Germans and the wrath of their God. The appointment of M. Cooreman would strengthen the clerical element in the Cabinet; and bitter attacks on him by the Liberals and the Socialists might be expected. The growing discontent of the Flemings would overcome their fear of being reproached with Germanism. The Belgian army, full of

[1] An allusion, of course, to Artois.

[2] Ludendorff, *My War Memories*, ii. 638.

[3] M. Davignon retired owing to ill-health in 1915, and died on March 13, 1916.

Flemish soldiers on the verge of mutiny, would melt away; and the Belgians, torn by internal dissensions, would be forced to take their place within the Germanic circle.

Predictions that Belgium would go to pieces and submit continued till the collapse of the last offensive. But when the tide turned, and the Allies were driving the Imperial armies before them, the leading Activists, whose treasonable conduct had caused furious indignation both in the Flemish and in the Walloon provinces, became alarmed. In August, during an interview with Count Hertling, the Imperial Chancellor, they had said that the " moral principle " of Activism was confidence in Germany; and the Chancellor, who was opposed to the Pan-German policy of annexing Belgium, told them that he hoped to see Flanders and Wallonia established as independent States. But their confidence was soon roughly shaken. In October, when the Germans were in full retreat, the most prominent Activists were advised to make the best of their way to Holland. All the Imperial Government could do for them was to help those who needed it with money; and a considerable sum was paid. Many of them fled, some to Holland and some to Germany. Even if they had succeeded in their designs on the Yser, and the Belgian army had ceased to exist as a fighting force, the Allies would have expelled the enemy, and the independence of Belgium would have been recovered. But the Belgian soldiers, in spite of discontent among some of the Flemings, kept together, and, under the command of King Albert, took their full share with the British in the pursuit of the enemy till the Armistice of November 11, 1918 was signed.

The treason of the Activists had not penetrated so far into the Belgian army as Ludendorff supposed. Nor had the German Governors succeeded in creating among the civilian population of occupied Belgium that spirit of " défaitisme " which they doubtless expected would be the result of their ruthless severity; and the soldiers who marched from the Yser were welcomed home by men and women who had never lost hope, even in the darkest hours of their tribulation.

CHAPTER X

THE PEACE CONFERENCE OF 1919

When the invaders had been driven out, and the heroic King and Queen of the Belgians made their triumphal entry into Brussels on November 22, 1918, the condition of Belgium was deplorable. The cessation of exports and imports had ruined every industry. Foreign markets had been lost. Factories had been systematically robbed of their machinery. Some of it had been destroyed, and some sent off to Germany. Horses, cattle, and other livestock had been removed. Household furniture had been stolen and carried away over the frontier. The railways had been torn up, and the bridges had been demolished. Though the devastation of the fighting zone in France was more appalling than anything that could be seen in Belgium, many towns, villages, and farms had been laid in ruins, and wide regions which had been highly cultivated lands were now barren wastes.

This was the state of the country when the Peace Conference met and decided, after long and difficult negotiations, that Belgium was to be relieved of, and Germany was to repay, all war loans contracted between August 4, 1914 and November 11, 1918, to have priority in the reparations to the amount of £100,000,000, to receive from Germany several thousand head of livestock at once, with 8,000,000 tons of coal annually for ten years, and to obtain some other forms of compensation. But it was soon found that her full claims could not be met; and the Belgians were disappointed. Isolated during four years, they knew little about the state of things in other parts of Europe. They had believed that when the war ceased raw material and supplies of every kind would at once begin to flow into the country, and had no idea of how unable their Allies were to help them. They sent their representatives to Paris expecting to receive far more than the Conference could give. It was easy to see that President Wilson had been taken at his own valuation, and thought more powerful than he really was. The seventh of his fourteen points of January 1918,

which said that Belgium must be not only evacuated by the Germans but " restored," had been read as an undertaking that the Allies would secure the complete restoration of the country ; and Mr. Lloyd George during the General Election in Great Britain had been understood to promise that the Germans would be forced to pay to the uttermost farthing for all the damage they had done. But none of the Allies could obtain anything approaching to compensation for their losses. All had to suffer. To find full reparation for the Belgians was impossible. This was, however, realised by few of them ; and the result was widespread discontent.

Long before the end of the war it had been known that the system of perpetual neutrality was to be repudiated. The neutrality declared by the Treaties of 1839 was the corner-stone of the Belgian State as constituted by the Conference of London. It had broken down ; and now the whole settlement was called in question, including those articles which fixed the territorial limits of the Kingdom.

The arrangements of 1839 relative to the land at the estuary of the Schelde were to be submitted for reconsideration by the Conference. Belgium, it was said, should possess Zeeland Flanders on the left bank ; and there can be no doubt that the position of Holland on the lower reaches of the river was a very genuine grievance. Geographically the left bank is part of Flanders ; and without it Belgium is kept at a distance from the mouth of the Schelde, which is not only a Belgian river throughout the longest part of its course, but is the water-way from the port of Antwerp to the sea. The situation of Antwerp is, in fact, what the situation of London would be if Kent and Essex were territories of a Foreign Power, which not only exercised sovereignty over the mouth of the Thames, but claimed a right to close it in time of war.[1]

Then there was the question of Limburg. In 1839 that province, the whole of which had hitherto been included in the Southern Netherlands, was, as we have already seen,[2] divided, the lands on the right bank of the Meuse being assigned to the King of the Netherlands, who also retained Maastricht with

[1] The literature dealing with the question of the Schelde is voluminous. A useful list of works on this subject will be found in a Biographical Note, appended to an article, by Professor Terlinden of Louvain, in *History* (the quarterly journal of the Historical Association) for April 1920. See also Kaeckenbeeck's *International Rivers*, and papers read before the Grotius Society by Maître Albert Maeterlinck for Belgium, and Dr. Bisschop for Holland, in May and July 1916: *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, iv. pp. 253–93.

[2] *Supra*, p. 47.

an adjoining radius of territory on the left bank, while Belgium received the remainder of the province. This partition was made against the wishes of the population,[1] and for many years it was hoped in Belgium that the right bank would be recovered. As to the wishes of the people at the close of the war, into which it was thought that the Conference might perhaps inquire, opinions varied. Propaganda on both sides proved nothing. Signs of a movement on the right bank in favour of reunion to Belgium were apparent at one time. But in January 1919 there was reason for believing that a powerful anti-Belgian agitation by the Dutch Catholic clergy, who have great influence in Dutch Limburg, where there is a large Catholic majority, had turned the scale definitely in favour of Holland. This was, however, doubted in Belgium, and a claim was made for the acquisition of Dutch Limburg. This was desired partly because the partition had placed obstacles in the way of Belgian commerce on the Meuse, and partly because the portion of Limburg belonging to Holland was a narrow strip of land, a mere *cul-de-sac*, which Holland herself could not defend.[2] The strategic situation was thus dangerous to the Belgians. They insisted that if the cession of the right bank, which they offered to defend, was refused, Holland ought not to leave unprotected a frontier the safety of which was of vital importance to her nearest neighbour; and they proposed a military compact for common action in the event of an attack. The Dutch, however, would not agree to this. Nor could they be expected to cede the right bank. It was of considerable value, for the only coal mines they have are there. The Belgian proposal was that compensation should be found for Holland in East Frisia, or the Prussian territory on the left bank of the Rhine south of Cleves, where there is more coal than in Dutch Limburg. But an obviously weak point in the Belgian case was that, the Dutch having been neutral in the war, it would be, even if all the Articles of 1839 were thrown into the melting-pot, a high-handed proceeding if the Conference tried to force them into accepting exchanges of territory against their will. No possible justification could, in fact, be found for putting pressure on Holland, even for the

[1] In *La Protestation de Limbourg, Quelques Documents* 1831–9 (Brussels. 1919) there is a collection of speeches and petitions by the people of Limburg against the partition.

[2] It was over this strip of land that the Germans retreated when they violated the neutrality of Holland in the autumn of 1918. They crossed the Meuse at Maeseyck, and took the road to Susteren.

sake of Belgian security, to annex a part of Prussia, a country with which she was at peace.

The question of Zeeland Flanders was peculiarly difficult. The situation there was highly prejudicial to Belgium; but Zeeland Flanders had belonged to Holland for 270 years, ever since the Peace of Westphalia, and the population was Dutch in all respects. Even when, between 1830 and 1839, the Five Powers were fixing the boundaries between Belgium and Holland, and imposing their decisions on both countries alike, the Belgians withdrew a claim which they had made to Zeeland Flanders, on the ground that it had been a Dutch possession for so many years, and that the population had taken little or no part in the revolt which led to the separation of the Southern from the Northern Netherlands. These reasons for leaving the left bank to Holland still held good; and in Great Britain, though there was universal sympathy with the wish of Belgium to alter the situation on the Schelde, it was felt that it could not be done without the consent of Holland. Nevertheless in Belgium hope ran high that the territorial arrangements of 1839 would be changed in her favour. Many were confident that the Great Powers would treat Belgium and Holland as if they were in the position which followed the separation of 1830, go into the whole question of the Netherland afresh, deal with it from the broadly European or international point of view, and, having regard to the events of the war, remember the sufferings endured by Belgium in fulfilling her Treaty obligations, and give her the benefit of any doubt which might arise.

On February 12, 1919 the question of revising the Treaties was sent by the Supreme Council to a Commission on Belgian Affairs, which reported in the following terms: "The Treaties negotiated against Belgium, and imposed by the Great Powers upon her and Holland, have furnished to Belgium none of the guarantees which they had promised her, and have greatly reduced, by the territorial and fluvial Articles, her possibilities of defence, and are largely responsible for the prejudice she has suffered."

During the war Belgian authors had been publishing, in France and Switzerland, a number of books and pamphlets on various matters connected with the history of the Low Countries.[1] Among these writings were several dealing with ques-

[1] One of the most interesting of these publications is *La Barrière Belge, Essais d'histoire territoriale et diplomatique*, by M. Pierre Nothomb. It was published by Perrin & Co., of Paris in 1916.

tions which were raised by the demand for a revision of the Treaties of 1839; and after the Armistice a *Comité de la Politique Nationale* covered the walls of almost every town with brightly coloured maps showing how the Southern Netherlands had been diminished since the reign of Charles V, bearing the words "Belges! Voyez la Belgique mutilée!" and declaring in a few crisp sentences, easily read by all who passed, that for the prosperity and future security of Belgium it was necessary that there should be extensive changes of the settlements made by the Congress of Vienna and the Conference of London. The propaganda of the *Comité de la Politique Nationale* was not official. But its object was to rouse public feeling and strengthen the hands of the Ministers when they brought the subject of revising the Treaties before the Conference; and from the Report of the Commission on Belgian Affairs it might have been assumed that in all probability most of the Belgian demands would be conceded. Nothing could be plainer than what was said in the Report. The articles complained of were condemned without any reservation.

The Report was presented to the Supreme Council on March 8, 1919; but there was no discussion on that day. At this point the Belgians apparently assumed that the acceptance of the Report meant that the questions of the Schelde, Zeeland Flanders, Limburg, and the Meuse had practically been decided in their favour. But, in point of fact, nothing had been decided. The Supreme Council did not discuss the Belgian question till they had heard the arguments of M. Hymans and Jonkheer van Karnebeek, the Belgian and Dutch Foreign Ministers. For three days the Council listened to the arguments on both sides. Thereafter, on June 4, having considered the matter in private, they gave a decision which defined the scope of the negotiations which were to take place on the revision of the Treaties. "The Powers," they announced, "having recognised the necessity for revising the Treaties of 1839, entrust to a Commission consisting of representatives of the United States of America, the British Empire, France, Japan, Belgium, and Holland, the task of considering this revision, and making proposals *which imply neither the transfer of territorial sovereignty nor the creation of international servitudes.*"

However unreasonable may have been the expectations of those who hoped for a redistribution of territory, the long delay, nearly two months, between the acceptance and discussion of the Commission's Report was most unfortunate, for it had raised false hopes among the Belgians; and when the

decision of June 4 became known there was serious disappointment among the general public. We know, men in the street said, that France was on our side. But Jonkheer Loudon [1] has the ear of Mr. Lansing. President Wilson, who did not raise a finger to help us in our hour of peril when the war began, but said he was too proud to fight, and that all we ought to hope for was a peace without victory, would probably have us believe that his League of Nations will be enough to make the Limburg frontier safe. Mr. Lloyd George is guided by General Smuts, a Hollander by origin. Other Powers, opposing France, have agreed to this decision in order to gain objects of their own ; and the result is that the question of altering the territorial Articles, the very matter about which we were most anxious to see our Government negotiating, has been prejudged against us. And what does this vague statement about the " creation of international servitudes " mean ? Evidently that Holland has obtained, by some secret move behind our backs, a promise that none of the privileges she enjoys on the Schelde and elsewhere are to be touched. Speculations such as these flew from mouth to mouth.

The Conference gave Belgium full sovereignty over the territory of Moresnet—a tiny district a few miles south-west of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle)—which had been under joint Belgian and Prussian administration since 1815, and also made over to her the Prussian districts of Eupen and Malmédy, on condition that the inhabitants agreed, as they afterwards did, to the transfer. But these were small gains ; and in the press there were fierce attacks on the Supreme Council for not supporting Belgium. Public opinion was violently excited ; and an acrimonious war of the pen was waged against Holland, where the Supreme Council's ruling of June 4 was received as a diplomatic victory won by Jonkheer van Karnebeek and Jonkheer Loudon.

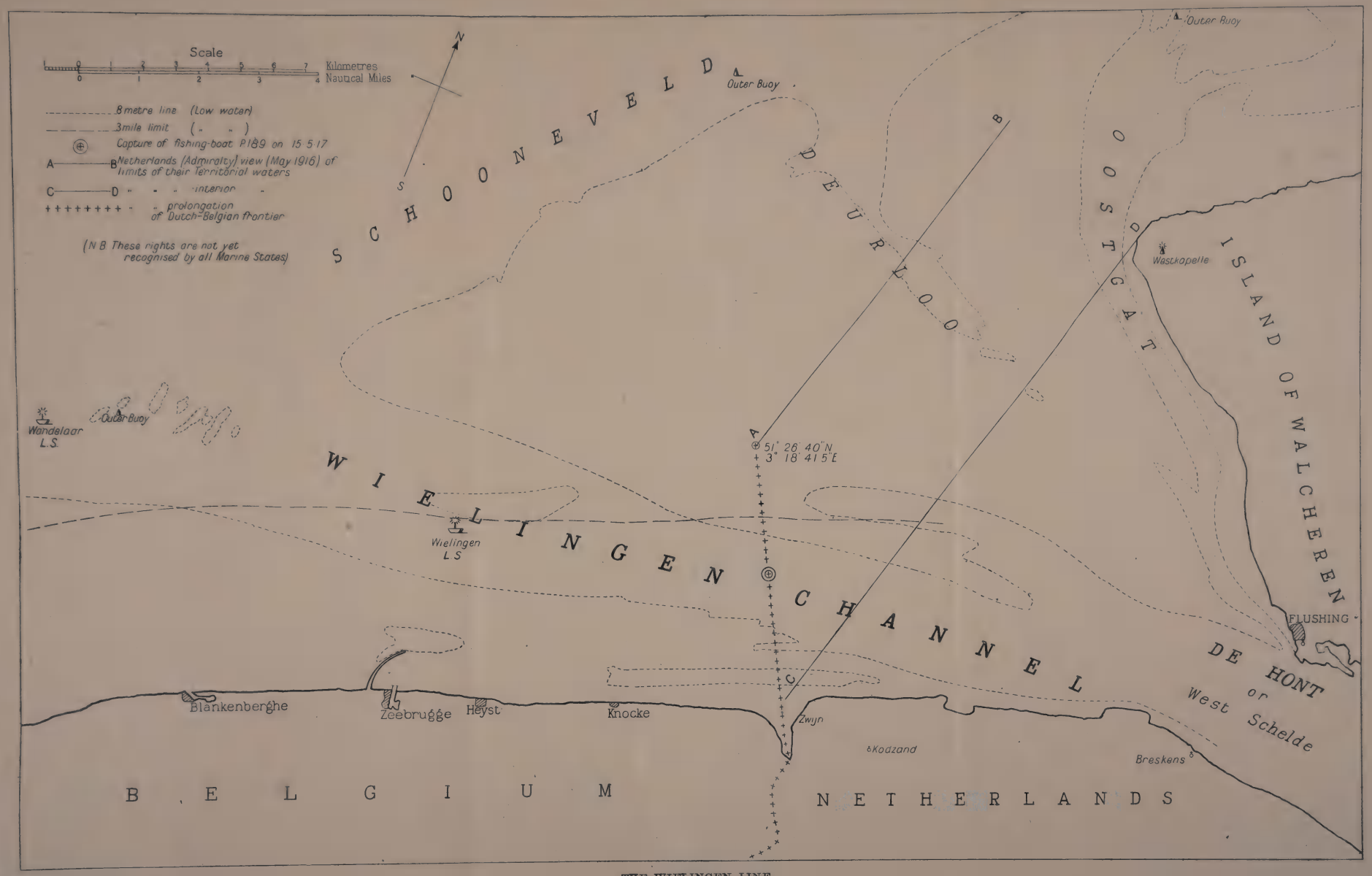
The Cabinet of Brussels agreed to negotiate on condition that the formula of June 4 was not to prevent the examination and adoption of any measures which might be found necessary to remove the risks to which, as the Powers themselves admitted, the Treaties of 1839 had exposed Belgium and the general peace of Europe. With transfers of territory from Holland to Belgium ruled out, but with other matters arising from the relations between the two countries as settled by the Treaties left open for discussion, the negotiations went on till May 1920, when they suddenly broke down on a point which had

[1] The Dutch Premier.

not been very prominent at first. This was the question as to which country was entitled to exercise sovereignty over the Wielingen, the sea channel which extends westwards along the coasts of Holland and Belgium, past Kadzand, which is Dutch, and then past Knocke and Zeebrugge, which are in Belgium. The frontier between Holland and Belgium reaches the shore at a point between Kadzand and Knocke. The waters of the Wielingen are Dutch territorial waters till they reach that point. Beyond it, to the west, they extend along the coast of Flanders within the three miles limit from the shore. Belgium therefore refused to allow Dutch sovereignty over them, on the ground that they were her territorial waters. Holland, on the other hand, maintained that they were merely a continuation of the Schelde, and therefore under her sovereignty. This was one of those questions of geographical fact which are so often connected with international law; but anyone who knows that region knows that the Flemish coast from the Dutch frontier westward is washed by the North Sea, to which it lies as open as the east coast of England. This being so, it is difficult to see how the Dutch negotiators could expect Belgium to admit that the claim of Holland to sovereignty over the Wielingen opposite Flanders had any justification in international law, to say nothing of the fact that to admit the Dutch claim would be to admit the right of Holland, if there was another war, to close the passage to the Belgian port of Zeebrugge as the passage to Antwerp was closed between 1914 and 1918.

During the discussions the Dutch went back for many centuries in their search for arguments, and relied on certain "historical rights" over these waters which the Counts of Zeeland exercised in the Middle Ages. But any argument based on these ancient rights is of purely antiquarian interest, and has no value at the present time, The erection of the Southern Netherlands into the independent Kingdom of Belgium implied the recognition of a right to the ordinary privileges of an independent State. One of these is sovereignty over territorial waters; and that the Wielingen seas off the coast of Flanders are part of the Belgian territorial waters is so perfectly evident that the Dutch claim to sovereignty over them might suggest that in Holland there are politicians who do not realise what Belgian independence means, or perhaps are not even yet reconciled to the loss of the Belgian provinces.

Two incidents during the war may be mentioned in connection with the Dutch claim. In May 1916 the Dutch Admiralty



THE WIELINGEN LINE.

gave the British Naval Authorities a map showing the limits of Dutch territorial waters, which asked for nothing but a right of way through the Wielingen for ships sailing to and from Flushing. Again, in 1917, the Dutch Government handed a Note to the Belgian Legation at The Hague, which said that the capture by the Germans of a Belgian fishing-boat (No. P189) in the Wielingen to the west of the frontier-line, on May 15, had taken place in Belgian territorial waters, and for that reason there was no responsibility on the part of Holland. This way of dealing with the case of the fishing-boat is obviously inconsistent with the claim of Holland to sovereignty over the Wielingen opposite the Flemish coast. If, as the Dutch said, the Wielingen Channel to the west of the frontier was part of the Belgian territorial waters during the war, the end of the war could not bring it within the territorial waters of Holland.

Opinion was divided in Holland, where the Belgian side of the dispute received support from jurists who had studied the question. But the Dutch Cabinet did not abandon their claim ; and at last, in May 1920, it was announced that the Belgian Government declined to continue negotiations on the revision of the Treaties of 1839 unless the question of the Wielingen was settled so as to preserve the rights and protect the interests of Belgium. A rupture of the negotiations followed ; and there has been a deadlock ever since.

CHAPTER XI

FOREIGN POLICY AND THE FLEMISH QUESTION

The war convinced most Belgians that their position on the map of Europe made permanent neutrality impossible. They had become acutely conscious of their precarious situation, and had at last taken to heart the lesson taught by the history of their country as a fragment of the ancient Kingdom of the Burgundies, the Buffer State lying between France and Germany, who for centuries had been making it their battle-field. This was something new in Belgium, where the population, in spite of many warnings, had been dreaming of perpetual peace, year after year down to that summer evening in 1914 when the rude awakening came. Now, as ever, they wished to be at peace. But war, as Mirabeau said, was the national industry of Prussia ; and in the States beyond the Rhine the Germans of the South had fallen completely under the dominion of Prussia. Prussian policy had ruled the Empire for many years. It was known that at the close of last century the British Cabinet had been ready for an agreement with Germany, and that even in the official circle at Berlin there were Germans who desired a good understanding with London. After all efforts for an agreement had been found hopeless owing to the attitude of the Imperial Government, and when it was suspected in Berlin, even before King Edward's visit to Paris in 1903, that an agreement between Great Britain and France was approaching, Count Schlieffen, then Chief of the General Staff, had been warned by Germans who were working for peace that his intended violation of Belgian neutrality would lead to war with Great Britain. This warning had been disregarded in 1914 ; and the Belgian provinces, victims of the worst Prussian crime since the invasion of Silesia, had been entered, conquered and held in bondage by the invaders for more than four years. They were now once more free ; the Emperor had fled ; and a Republic had been proclaimed. But the habit of submission to the army leaders was so confirmed in Germany that the Belgians feared that the Prussian military

party might recover the ascendency which had been partly lost. If that came to pass there would be no security either for them or for the French ; and it is impossible to exaggerate the intense distrust of Prussianised Germany which was felt in Belgium at the end of the war, and how anxious the Cabinet of Brussels were to obtain for their country adequate safeguards against aggression in the future.

On June 28, 1919 the Treaty of Versailles was signed, and as an integral part of it the tenth Article of the Covenant of the League of Nations, by which the Powers adhering to the League bound themselves to preserve against aggression the integrity and political independence of all the other members. On the same day were also signed the Treaties of Alliance between Great Britain and France, and between France and the United States of America, by which Great Britain and the American States undertook to support France against an unprovoked attack by Germany.

For the Belgians this meant that, besides the guarantee given by the League of Nations, they could depend on British and American intervention if German armies again crossed the frontiers of Belgium in order to attack France. But though President Wilson was entitled by the Constitution of the United States to negotiate a Treaty personally, ratification by the Congress was required to make it effective, and he had not secured the consent of the Republican leaders at Washington, who refused either to abandon the traditional policy of the United States by assuming the responsibilities which joining the League of Nations would lay on them, or to entangle the States in a European Alliance by binding them to cooperate in the defence of France. Acting within its constitutional rights, the Senate repudiated the League of Nations ; and the Treaty with France was not ratified.

When the Treaty between Great Britain and France came before Parliament a Bill approving it was read a first time in the House of Commons without opposition,[1] and was soon passed into law.[2] But the Treaty had provided that our obligation to defend France was contingent on the United States undertaking a similar liability. When, therefore, President Wilson's action was disavowed at Washington, Great Britain was technically absolved from her bond. It would, however, have been in accordance with the British tradition

[1] On July 3, 1919. *Hansard*, cvii. 1236.

[2] "Anglo-French Treaty (Defence of France) Act, 1919," 9 & 10 Geo. V, c. 34 (July 31, 1919).

of fidelity to our Allies to inform France that, despite what had been done in America, this country intended to stand faithful to the engagement entered into at Versailles. The failure to do so was a bitter disappointment to the French, who had relinquished their plans on the Rhine in reliance on our adhering to the Treaty we had signed; and the whole fabric of the *entente cordiale*, already disturbed by differences during the Conference, was shaken to its foundations.

This was a serious matter for the Belgians. They were not powerful enough to preserve their independence by their own exertions. Some trustworthy guarantee was needed; and now, with the British and American Treaties with France in abeyance, the only guarantee they had was that contained in the Covenant of the League of Nations. Belgium was one of the first States to join the League; and the Belgians hoped that its headquarters would be in Brussels. They felt sure that if planted down there, at the point of danger between France and Germany, its influence would be greater and it could act more promptly than if isolated in Switzerland. There was, however, a very general feeling that, rejected by the United States, deeply distrusted by France, and by no means unanimously accepted in Great Britain as an instrument capable of preventing war, the League did not provide any genuine security. The Belgians are a practical people, not easily impressed by high-sounding words, or deluded by visions of an ideal world. They saw that there was really no covenant between peoples, races, nations, but merely a document signed by delegates of certain Governments; that all the ambitions, jealousies, suspicions, and commercial rivalries which had been causes of war in the past were as strong as ever; that it was more than doubtful if Germany could be disarmed; that the Russian Bolsheviks, with the Communists of every country, avowedly bent on raising a world revolution against all the settled Governments, were stirring up new forms of international discord; and that it would be folly to rely for safety on the declarations of a company of gentlemen, however well-meaning and distinguished, sitting round a table at Geneva with no power to enforce compliance with their decisions. They desired something more definite and reliable than anything they found in the Covenant of the League; and so their foreign policy was directed to forming a defensive military alliance.

France and Belgium naturally turned to each other. Their interests were the same; the same danger threatened both; and on September 17, 1920 a military agreement was signed

by Marshal Foch, and by the Generals Buat and Maglinse, Chiefs of the French and Belgian Staffs. The terms of this agreement were kept strictly secret; and believers in the efficacy of the League began to complain that this was inconsistent with Article 18 of the Covenant, which declares that every international engagement between members of the League must be registered with the Secretariat and forthwith published. But no military agreement can be of any value if its terms are disclosed. Free nations will never surrender their right to protect themselves against aggression; and if the measures they deem necessary cannot be made effective in accordance with any Article of the Covenant, that article will be ignored. The Franco-Belgian agreement has been registered; but its stipulations cannot be published, and must remain secret. It is non-aggressive, and, in the opinion of the Belgian Government, supplements the guarantees of peace offered by the League of Nations.[1]

The agreement with the French is resented by those Flemings who are opposed to any foreign policy which brings France into close relations with Belgium. The Activists fell into disrepute during the war. Many of them were tried and punished for their dealings with the enemy. Some were sentenced to death, but escaped with imprisonment.[2] So universal was the public disapproval of their conduct that it seemed as if nothing more would be heard of them. But the Activists who fled, or were arrested and brought to trial, have been succeeded by the Front Party, which includes members of the disaffected faction which existed in the Belgian army towards the end of the war, and some of the Activists who were in Belgium during the occupation. These are Flamingants of the extreme school. Far more numerous are the Moderate Flamingants who, apart from their strong feelings on the linguistic question, are stimulated to keep the Flemish question prominent by their dislike of the *entente* with France, which they fear may not only make the foreign policy of Belgium dependent on French requirements, but will so greatly increase the use of the French language that Flemish, if it does not perish, will never receive the recognition which they claim for it.

The settlement desired by some Flamingants is local self-

[1] "Le but de cet accord," M. Delacroix, the Belgian Minister, wrote to M. Millerand on September 10, 1920, "est de renforcer les garanties de paix et de sureté résultant du Pacte de la Société des Nations"

[2] In Belgium the death penalty, though not formally abolished, is never inflicted, except in cases tried under martial law. The Activists were tried by a judge and jury.

government for the Flemish provinces; and this project has been approved by a section of the Walloons. Some years ago, in 1912, a Walloon Congress passed a resolution in favour of giving local autonomy to both "Flandria" and "Wallonia"; and M. Jules Destrée, a Walloon Socialist deputy in the Chamber, published a letter to King Albert, in which he said, "Il n'y a pas de Belges; vous régnez sur deux peuples."[1] Since the war, and particularly since the agreement with France, it has been asserted that there are Walloons who aim at union with the French Republic. This disruption of Belgium would, however, be opposed both by the Walloons and by the Flemings if it became a question of practical politics; and however much many of the moderate Flemings may be in opposition to the foreign policy of the Government, it is improbable that their movement will ever go beyond constitutional action to obtain complete equality between the two languages in a United Kingdom of Belgium.

For the Front Party, on the other hand, there is no United Kingdom; it may almost be said there is no Belgium. There is a State, they say, French in its origin and inspired by French deals, which they accuse of holding down a "Flemish Nation." They reject the doctrine of Professor Pirenne, and some other historians, that the Flemings and the Walloons have for centuries been working towards union and consciously growing together into one nation. To them that reading of history is erroneous, and suggested by a latent wish to submerge the Flemings under French culture. Forgetting, it would appear, the part played by Great Britain between 1830 and 1839, they look on the creation of the Belgian Kingdom as the means by which France, when the annexation of Flanders was found impossible, chiefly owing to the continuous opposition of England, hoped to obtain her object indirectly; and they see nothing in the *entente* with France but a move of the ruling classes to bring about the subjection of Flanders to French influences. This, it need hardly be said, is a wild imagination. The chief object of the Belgian Ministers in making the agreement was the defence of Belgium. But the Front Party say that they suspect that the relations between the two countries will be designedly made so close that the Flemish language will gradually disappear, and with it Flemish literature and social customs. To prevent this they insist that Belgium should be changed into a Federation with independence for

[1] M. Destrée was Belgian Minister in Russia during the war, and afterwards a member of the Belgian Cabinet (November 1919).

Flanders. A manifesto in *Ons Vaderland*, their official newspaper, in March 1919, made no concealment of their intention to aim at acquiring control of the executive power in Flanders. They further demanded that the military organisation of Belgium should be altered, and the forces divided into what would be two separate armies, one consisting of Flemish and the other of Walloon regiments.

Though it is a generally recognised rule that no Conference of the Powers will interfere with the internal affairs of any State which does not threaten the tranquillity of other States, and does not endanger the lives or confiscate the property of their nationals trading peacefully within its territory, a Front Party "Flemish National Committee" in Holland sent a letter to President Wilson, in the summer of 1919, asking him to make the Flemish question a topic of debate at the Peace Conference. The emphasis laid by President Wilson on his dangerously far-reaching dogma of self-determination encouraged them to represent the Flemings as members of a separate nation persecuted by the Belgian Government.[1] But this attempt to internationalise the Flemish question failed. Men of moderate opinions, who are a large majority of the Flemish population, disapproved of it. The Front Party, however, maintain a correspondence with Holland; and there is some reason for believing that a section of the extremists aim at reuniting Flanders to Holland. But though there are observers of Dutch opinion who say that if the Front Party, baffled in their attempt to substitute a Federation for the existing Belgian Constitution, could persuade a substantial party in Flanders to seek incorporation with Holland, such a movement would find support in that country, Dutch statesmen are far too shrewd to take part in changing the Flemish movement, which is a matter for Belgium to settle without external interference or advice, into an international question affecting the interests and policy of all the Western Powers.

Though the Dutch Government will, we may be sure, wisely refuse to involve their country in the domestic affairs of Belgium, and will thus avoid risking a European crisis of the

[1] "It is the hope of the Flemish Nationalists that you may so far interest yourself in the pitiful case of the oppressed Flemings, and in the life-interests of the Flemish race—which, together with their Northern brethren the Dutch, laid the foundations of your powerful Republic—as to cause an independent inquiry to be made into the Flemish question, to make it a subject of international debate at the Peace Conference, and to satisfy yourself that the new order of things in Europe is incompatible with a continuation of the wilful oppression of that race within the Kingdom of Belgium" ("The Committee at The Hague to President Wilson," May 9, 1919).

first magnitude, there are private persons in Holland who may act otherwise. Flemish as a written language being the same as Dutch, there are men of letters in Holland who have always been interested in Flemish literature; and of late they have been studying the political aspect of the question. Irritated by the attacks on Holland in the Belgian press, they look on official Belgium with hostile eyes, watch the Flemish question closely, and, the wish perhaps being father to the thought, have persuaded themselves that it not only troubles the Government at Brussels now, but may one day shatter the structure of the Belgian State. Some of them say that the Kingdom of Belgium will not last for more than about fifteen years. They believe that a disruption is impending; that the Walloons regard Belgium as a French province, and are ready to transfer their allegiance to France; that, except perhaps in Brussels, there is no sentiment of patriotism for a common country; that, in short, there is no such thing as a Belgian nation. But surely it is puerile to pretend that the people of all the Belgian provinces have not exhibited for more than ninety years the qualities which constitute a nation; and the whole world saw during the war the vast majority displaying a spirit of most genuine patriotism. There appear, however, to be in Holland "Intellectuals" who think otherwise, who are tempted by their zeal for Flemish literature to take part in this purely Belgian controversy, and pursue a course tending to impair the unity of Belgium. Recent propaganda in Great Britain seems designed to obtain, in the Press and elsewhere, the support of British journalists and politicians who are not in sympathy with France.

The British people can never, any more than in the days of Jacques van Artevelde, be indifferent to the fate of Flanders. But international courtesy forbids them to intrude upon the controversy unless the Front Party, aided by Dutch, and perhaps also by German, propaganda, succeed in reviving von Bissing's plan so that it seriously threatens a disruption of the Belgian Kingdom, the preservation of which is one of the foremost of British interests. One thing, however, which makes the arrival of such a catastrophe most unlikely is that between the Flemings and the Walloons there is none of that racial antipathy, the existence of which between subjects of the same State must always be dangerous, if not fatal, to harmony in its national life. Nor is there anything in the language question to prevent friendly intercourse; for the controversy is not between the Flemings and the Walloons, but between two

groups of Flemings, those who prefer to speak French, and wish it to be the dominant language in both private and public life, and those who are working to obtain for Flemish literature a higher status, and for the spoken tongue recognition as something more than a mere dialect used by the lower orders. Students of the Flemish problem and its possible influence on the destinies of Belgium would, moreover, do well to bear in mind what an element of stability that State possesses in the free Constitution under which the Flemings and Walloons have lived and prospered side by side for nearly a century.

For many years steps have been taken to meet the Flemish complaints; and in August 1921 a law was passed which has received the support of the influential Flemish Society.[1] It provides for the use of both languages in official correspondence. In the provinces of East and West Flanders, Antwerp and Limburg, and in the districts round Brussels and Louvain the Flemish language will be used in the local public services, and in correspondence with the central departments of State. In the provinces of Liége, Belgian Luxembourg, Namur and Hainaut, and in the Nivelles district (S. Brabant), French will be used. The Provincial Council of Brabant is to fix the official language for Brussels. It also provides that in Communes where it appears that a majority of the inhabitants habitually speak a language other than that assigned to them by the law as their official language, the Communal Councils are to decide which shall be used. Public notices issued by the Communal Authorities are to be published in both languages in localities where this is demanded by 20 per cent. of the electors, or by 15,000 electors where there are more than 70,000 names on the electoral roll.

No official may be appointed unless he knows the language of the district in which he is to serve. Candidates for employment in departments of the Central Government, in Brabant, or in the district of Brussels, must pass an examination in either French or Flemish. If a candidate chooses to be examined in Flemish, an elementary knowledge of French is to be required, and if he chooses French an elementary knowledge of Flemish. After January 1, 1925, no one is to be appointed to any of the higher offices without passing an examination in both languages.

These are the chief provisions of the "Loi Flamande," which

[1] *The Vlaamsch Verbond*, founded by M. van Cauwelaert, who declared against "administrative separation." It is represented in the Press by *De Standaard*, a Brussels newspaper.

came in force on January 1, 1922. This is a genuine attempt to settle a very difficult and complicated matter. It is the latest of a long series of enactments which, beginning about fifty years ago, when the accused at criminal trials were given the right to have the prosecution and defence conducted in Flemish, have been intended to make the two languages equal in the Courts of Law, the Schools, the Army, and other public services. If fairly and impartially administered, it must go far to satisfy the moderate Flamingants. But the formation of a "Federation of Flemish Nationalists," supported by a section of the Press in Holland, and having for its object the independence of Flanders, shows that the political aims of the extreme party remain unaltered.

For some years the question of university education has been prominent in connection with the Flemish Movement. There are four Universities in Belgium, at Louvain, Brussels, Liége, and Ghent. The Universities of Liége and Ghent are State institutions. Those at Louvain and Brussels are non-official, or "free." At all of them education has hitherto been given in French; and against this the Flamingant[1] party have carried on a prolonged agitation, which came to a head in the winter of 1922–23. As we have already seen, the creation of a purely Flemish University at Ghent was attempted by von Bissing.[2] At that time most of the supporters of this project were Activists. But the question as to whether there should not be Flemish teaching at the University of Ghent was mentioned by King Albert in his first speech from the throne after the war; and since then there has been a continuous discussion on the subject.

When the question came before the Chambers in 1922 it was found that the more ardent Flamingants, especially the small Front Party, desired the total abolition of all French teaching. Their opponents replied that this would be inconsistent with the true interests of Flemish students, and that only a minority of the Flemings were in favour of so complete a change. French, they said, being an international language, widely spoken in the Flemish as well as the Walloon provinces, it would be a gross error to stamp it out, and replace it by Flemish, which is scarcely known beyond the frontiers of Belgium. It was,

[1] "Flamingant" is really a nickname; but it can be used without offence to describe the militant section of the Flemings, as "Fransquillon," another nickname, is applied to Flemings who prefer, and habitually use, the French language.

[2] *Supra*, p. 131.

indeed, impossible to ignore the fact that Belgian men of letters, Maeterlinck and Verhaeren for example, wrote in French though they were Flemings. Otherwise their works, so well known throughout the world, would have few readers except within the narrow circle of the Netherlands. All parties, however, were agreed that the University of Ghent ought not to remain entirely French. Various proposals were made. The partisans of the Flemish Movement made a concession when they accepted the principle that no student could obtain a degree without passing an examination in French in at least one course yearly, and the Chamber of Representatives adopted a law providing that the lectures on Classical and French literature, together with those on engineering and other technical subjects, should continue to be delivered in French, while Flemish was to be the medium of instruction in the other courses. The introduction of Flemish was to be brought about by degrees ; and all professors on the existing staff were to be at liberty to continue lecturing in French during their tenure of office. This measure, which caused party demonstrations by both sides, and satisfied neither, least of all the irreconcilables of the Front Party, was carried in the First Chamber by a narrow majority, and sent up to the Senate, where it was rejected. A Commission was then appointed to propose amendments in the hope of finding a compromise acceptable to both Chambers. It was thought possible, if no compromise was reached, that a temporary solution might be to maintain the French University side by side with a Flemish University for some years.

M. Theunis, the Prime Minister, and his colleagues had remained neutral during the discussions. But on June 14, 1923, seeing no prospect of a solution being reached, and confronted, moreover, by opposition from the Socialists to their proposals for army reorganisation, they resigned. A Ministerial crisis followed. This was very embarrassing to the Cabinet, who were thus interrupted in the midst of the critical negotiations on the subject of the reparations and the Ruhr. At the end of the month, however, having privately secured agreement to a compromise, they all returned to office, and a law was passed which has settled the question for a time at least.

The University of Ghent is to consist of a Flemish and a French section. In the faculties of philosophy, general literature, law, science, and medicine students may choose either the Flemish or the French section. In the Flemish section two-thirds of the instruction will be in Flemish and one-third in

French ; and in the French section two-thirds will be in French and one-third in Flemish. But, though the use of Flemish will be introduced as soon as possible, those who have begun their studies in French will have the right to finish them entirely in that language.

This measure, which became law at the end of July 1923, was not carried without considerable opposition. One deputy described it as " mauvaise et même abominable," declared that it would ruin the University, was the result of equivocal and underhand tactics, and would not settle the linguistic question. " Les Wallons Catholiques," he said, " voteront la loi, mais à contre coeur. Je ne crois pas que l'on peut fonder la paix linguistique sur des équivoques. En Flandre, on n'illumera pas, demain ; mais pour la Wallonie, cette journée sera une journée de découragement et de la tristesse." M. Hymans, one of the opponents, gave as his reason for assenting to it that the Cabinet had made it a question of confidence, and that he believed M. Theunis ought to be maintained in office in order that he might deal with the question of reparations ; and this seems to have been the general feeling of the Opposition. The application of the new system to the University of Ghent is to commence with the Academical Year 1923–24.

CHAPTER XII

THE PARTIES

When King Albert was on his way to Brussels in November 1918, a new administration, composed partly of members of the Havre Government, and partly of others who had been in Belgium during the occupation, was formed by M. Delacroix, an eminent lawyer who had hitherto taken no part in politics. It was believed that no Government but a Coalition would be able to cope with the formidable task of restoring the country ; and six Catholics, six Liberals, and six Socialists took office, a combination which fairly represented the leading parties in the State.[1]

There had been no such fusion of parties for many years. The Catholics and the Liberals had remained more or less united from 1830 to 1846. In that year they finally parted company, and struggled for the mastery till 1884, when the Catholics came into power. They ruled Belgium till 1914. Put broadly, the Belgian Catholic party is clerical, and supports the Church, while a majority of Liberals claim the right of private judgment, and are free-thinkers. The Liberals have always opposed the policy of the Church, particularly on the question of education, which the Catholics have fought hard to keep in the hands of the clergy. The Liberals were for many years in favour of making education compulsory. But the whole weight of the Church was thrown into the scales against this reform ; and it was not carried till 1914. Then, after long years of conflict, which almost plunged Belgium into civil war, a law which M. de Broqueville, himself a Catholic, had introduced in the previous year was passed.

Under this Education Law, with amendments made in 1919 and 1921, attendance at elementary schools is compulsory on all children between the ages of six and fourteen, except those educated at home, those who have no school within four kilo-

[1] This was arranged at Lophem, near Bruges, where a deputation met the King and requested the formation of a Coalition Ministry. M. Hymans remained in office as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

metres of their homes, and those whose parents have conscientious objections to the teaching of the schools near them.

Every Commune must have at least one State or public school, but may undertake, "adopt," the management of a private school or schools [1]; and if this is done the Commune is not expected to maintain a State school, unless the people of the district call for one. Subsidies, provided by the State, the Provinces, and the Communes, are given to schools undergoing Government inspection. In Flanders the children are taught in Flemish, with French as a secondary language. There are no school fees. Great attention is paid to technical education. Girls are taught needlework, housekeeping, and domestic economy. In country districts boys are instructed in farmwork and gardening. In towns they receive training for commercial life, or for the career of skilled artisans. At one time the standard of education was very low, especially in the Flemish provinces, where, less than twenty years ago, more than half the population over forty years of age were illiterate.[2] If the new law is rigorously enforced, Flanders, where the standard of education was lowest, as many children never went to school, will benefit more than any other part of the country.[3]

The partly political and partly religious contest between the Catholics and the Liberals, in which education played so great a part, was fought with extreme violence for many years. As the Belgian Constitution is founded on traditions of individual liberty, so the passions which have disfigured the political life of Belgium were inherited from the times when there was no Central Authority, when, though the system of local government by the people of each Commune or Province was common to them all, each looked askance at its neighbour, and was eager to advance its own prosperity at the expense of any rival. The existence of a Central Government in the Burgundian, Spanish, Austrian, and French periods did not change this characteristic; and when the Kingdom of Belgium was created, and the liberties which the people of each separate locality had claimed or enjoyed in ancient days were codified, and embodied in the

[1] The private schools are practically all managed by the clergy.

[2] For statistics see Rowntree, *Land and Labour Lessons from Belgium*, pp. 257–82.

[3] The compulsory Education Law was first put in force by the German Government during the occupation. They divided the whole country into separate educational districts, and laid down a hard-and-fast rule as to which language was to be used in the elementary schools. This was an alteration of the Belgian law, under which the parents chose the language in which their children were to be instructed. Whatever the heads of families might wish, Flemish was made the only medium of education in places where a large proportion of children habitually spoke French.

Belgian Constitution, the contentious habit bred by the spirit and practice of particularism was not extinguished, but flowed into new channels. The Catholic and Liberal factions were long predominant, and their chronic quarrel poisoned the social life of the country. At last a new party came upon the scene, when the Socialists, discarding their distinctive title, entered the political arena as the "Belgian Labour Party."

This was in 1885. The Catholics had lately won the electoral victory which gave them thirty years of office. The controversy on education had fallen for a time into the background, and the formation of a Labour Party, with Socialism for its aim, was followed by an agitation for a change in the laws relating to the franchise. There had already been several alterations in the election laws since 1831, when the franchise was given to those having a property qualification estimated by the taxes they paid; and in 1894 the vote was given to all citizens who were twenty-five years old, and had lived for one year in the same Commune. But this concession to the Labour Party was neutralised by the "Plural Vote." Under that system the head of every family who paid a house-tax of five francs, and was thirty-five years old, had an extra vote. So had every elector with a yearly income of 100 francs from the public funds, or of 48 francs from land or buildings. All who had educational diplomas, who had served in public office, or belonged to certain professions, had two additional votes. Five years later the election law was further altered by the introduction of proportional representation, Belgium being the first country in Europe to adopt that system.

Though under the plural franchise no elector could use more than three votes, the combined effect of the new laws was that, while proportional representation increased the number of Liberals who were returned, the Labour-Socialist Movement was thrown back, and the Catholic majority remained unbroken. In 1912 some of the Liberals joined forces with the Socialists in voting, at an election of that year, against the Government, and for the adoption of universal suffrage pure and simple. But a conservative section of the Liberals supported the Ministers, whose majority was consequently increased, Next year, however, the Government appointed a Commission to inquire into the election laws. But no Report had been presented when the war began.

When King Albert returned to Brussels after the war he informed the Chambers, in his first speech from the throne, that the plural vote was to be abolished, and replaced by uni-

versal suffrage, giving the franchise to every citizen on reaching the age of twenty-one.

This sweeping measure was a change of the Constitution which, in strict law, could be carried out only by Chambers specially elected for the purpose under the existing franchise. But this would have caused a long delay. Difficult problems arising out of the state in which the war had left the country were pressing for solution. The King and his Cabinet desired the support of Chambers chosen on the principle of complete electoral equality, and in April 1919 a measure was passed providing that, before the end of the year, a Constituent Assembly should be elected by universal suffrage to revise the Constitution, and formally abolish the plural vote.[1]

It was easy to foresee that under a widely extended franchise the balance of power among the parties would be changed. New forces were gathering strength; and the Flemish question was a disturbing element. "If my anticipations are realised," M. Destrée said, "the old clerical type of Government and the present Government of *union sacrée* will have had their day, and the only Government that will have a chance will be one still national perhaps, that is, recruited from various parties, but certainly constituted on the basis of democratic action." This prediction that the long ascendency of the Catholics was about to end came true, partly because so many country priests were warm supporters of the Flamingant Movement. Such leaders of the Church as Cardinal Mercier, who has always opposed "Flamingantism" in every shape, had not sufficient influence to prevent a split in the Catholic vote. The elections took place on November 16, 1919, when the Catholic majority disappeared, and the Labour-Socialists gained a number of seats both from Liberals and Catholics.

Some months later, when a law revising the Constitution was passed by which the adoption of universal suffrage was regularised, the Belgian franchise was placed on its present footing. Every man over twenty-one years of age with a six months' residential qualification, has a vote. So have widows and mothers of soldiers killed in the war, or of civilians put to death by the enemy, provided they have not married again, and also women who suffered imprisonment for patriotic services during the German occupation.

M. Delacroix was head of the Government till November 1920, when, after a crisis caused by the resignation of M. Hymans

[1] The position was curious. The Constituent Assembly was to make regular and constitutional the franchise under which it was itself elected.

and other Ministers who disapproved of the refusal by a majority of the Cabinet to allow munitions to pass through Antwerp on their way to Poland, another Coalition Government was formed by M. Carton de Wiart, with M. Jaspar as Foreign Minister. The new Prime Minister and M. Jaspar were both Catholics ; but they had four Socialist colleagues, one of whom, M. Anseele, Minister of Public Works, attended a Socialist meeting where a red flag was displayed on which there was a picture of a Belgian soldier breaking his rifle. This incident dissolved the Government. M. Albert Devèze, Minister of National Defence, refused to sit in the same Cabinet with M. Anseele, whose resignation was demanded by the Catholic and Liberal Ministers. He resigned, and the other three Socialists, M. Vandervelde, M. Destrée, and M. Wauters went out with him.

In November 1921 there was a general election, the first since the Constitution was revised, for both Chambers. In the Lower House the Catholics gained six seats, the Socialists lost four, and the Liberals one. The Front Party, who had carried five seats at the election of 1919, lost one of them. On this occasion Socialists were returned for the first time to the Senate, where they had not hitherto been represented because of a money deposit, no longer necessary, which candidates had formerly to make. At this juncture M. Carton de Wiart retired, and was succeeded by his Minister of Finances, Colonel Theunis, a non-party man, who formed another Coalition Cabinet of five Catholics and five Liberals, in which M. Jaspar retained the portfolio of the Foreign Office.

This dry recital of political movements and Ministerial changes may be enough to show how the machinery of the Constitution worked in Belgium at a time of disorganisation in public and private life succeeding four years of war, during which the country was in the hands of an enemy. Time will show whether the secession of the Socialists from the Coalition has been the prelude to a rupture between the Catholic and Liberal parties. It is not only in political but also in social life that party feeling has always run high in Belgium. In other countries, particularly in Great Britain, where foes in public are so often friends in private, it is difficult to realise the influence of political differences in a country where the adherents of a party have so little intercourse with their opponents that literary and artistic institutions, co-operative societies, trades unions, even football clubs and public-houses are often known as Catholic, Liberal, or Socialist. No organisation, even though its objects are professedly non-political, can escape the party

badge. In a pamphlet published at The Hague, in 1920, there is a passage complaining of this state of things from the Flamingant point of view. "It should be remembered," the writer says, "that in no country in the world are party politics carried to further extremes than in Belgium, where a man is first a Catholic, a Liberal, or a Socialist, and only in the second place a Fleming or a Walloon. Being a "Belgian" hardly consists in anything else. Party interest dominates everything, even national interests. Before everything the "Belgian" fights for the triumph of the party to which he belongs, or rather is affiliated, and the leaders do whatever they can to foster that spirit among their followers and among the people. The adherents of the various parties mercilessly and continually ridicule, depreciate, calumniate, accuse each other, and make each other suspected." [1]

This is an exaggeration; but there has always been so great a gulf between the Catholics and the Liberals that their union may not long survive the return to normal conditions in the national life. There is, besides the profound cleavage on religious questions, a certain divergence of opinion on the Flemish Movement. The Flamingants, though opposed by eminent Churchmen like Cardinal Mercier, and by the official leaders, find the bulk of their adherents among the Catholic rank and file, who are apt to take their opinions from the parish priests, while very few Liberals, of whatever class, have any sympathy with the Flemish Movement. The Catholic and the Liberal leaders agree in opposing the separatist policy promoted by a section of the Flamingants; and, if the activities of the extremists become really dangerous to the State, the language question, instead of tending to separate the parties, may be the means of keeping them together.

Many Catholics have been for a number of years in sympathy with the aspirations of the Socialist party. The Liberals, on the other hand, have never left the path of strict individualism. A progressive section of that party gave support to the Labour-Socialist agitation for universal suffrage and the abolition of the plural vote, partly, no doubt, because a large extension of the franchise to the working classes was in accordance with the general principles of Liberalism, but chiefly perhaps because the plural vote was the means by which the Conservative

[1] *Pro Flandria servanda: Flanders' Right and Claim for Autonomy.* Published by the Flemish Committee at The Hague. The writer goes on to say that the two "bourgeois" parties (Catholics and Liberals) only agree in keeping down the Flemish Movement.

Catholics were kept in power. Another section, doctrinaires of the old school, opposed the change in the Constitution, and so retarded it for a time. But the majority in both parties are against the adoption of the Socialist system ; and if the Coalition of Catholics and Liberals came to an end in the Chambers, it is difficult to see how they could avoid acting together in one of two schools of political opinion which, under the extended franchise, will stand out prominently in the country. Smaller groups, such as the " Christian Democrats," now almost merged in the powerful Socialist combination, are disappearing ; and it seems likely that henceforth party warfare in Belgium will become more and more a struggle between the supporters and opponents of Socialism.

Happily for Belgium, it may be confidently anticipated that the Socialists will rely on constitutional action. In the years which immediately followed their appearance as a political party there were, on several occasions, serious disturbances and attempts to win the battle of the franchise by mob violence and the weapon of " direct action " in the shape of general strikes. But, though this form of agitation certainly did something towards convincing the leaders of the old parties that it would be safer to admit the working classes to a large share in governing the country than to exclude them, the general public were alienated by riotous conduct intended to coerce the Chambers. Nor are strikes, which seldom increase the profits of his labour, but as a rule consume them, popular with the thrifty Belgian worker. The Great Co-operative Societies, with their vast capital, the property of the working classes themselves, prudently invested, carefully managed, and yielding heavy profits in such famous institutions as the Maison du Peuple at Brussels, are the best proof that the Belgian Labour-Socialists are very unlike the international revolutionaries who follow the lead of the Bolsheviks. Processions with red flags, fiery speeches, gatherings in the streets which seem dangerous to strangers who do not understand the character of the people, even noisy scenes in the Chambers, there have been and always will be. But, though Belgium is often called the land of experiments, the very last experiment which is likely to be tried in a country where the Catholic Church is held in such esteem, where the Monarchy has been ennobled by a King whose conduct gained the admiration of the world during the years of war, where there are so many peasant farmers, and where the people are so distinguished by practical common sense, is an experiment in Communism.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CONGO COLONY

It was on November 15, 1908 that the Independent Congo State became a Belgian Colony. King Leopold had resisted to the last the terms proposed for the cession to Belgium, particularly the surrender of the *Fondation de la Couronne.* There was also much opposition in the Chambers and in the country, chiefly because it was feared that if Belgium became a Colonial Power it would be necessary to expend large sums on a navy, and also on an army for service in Africa. But at last the annexation was agreed to, and the flag of the Congo State, blue with a golden star in the centre, was replaced by the black, yellow, and red of Belgium.

By the "Traité de cession de l'État Indépendant du Congo à la Belgique," after the King had given way, the sovereignty of the Congo, with the possessions and obligations of the Independent State, was made over to the Kingdom of Belgium. The possessions, including lands, buildings, boats, rubber, ivory, military stores, and other assets, were estimated at the value of about £5,000,000. The obligations, in the shape of public debts, amounted to a sum equal to the assets; and Belgium also became liable for annuities to Prince Albert till his accession, to the Princess Clémentine till she married,[1] to former officials of the Fondation, and to the congregation of Scheutlez-Bruxelles.[2] It was also provided that the Belgian State was to continue the public works on which the King had been expending most of the income he received from the Fondation, and to maintain the magnificent tropical glasshouses at Laeken and the Colonial Museum at Tervueren.

Anyone who looks at a map of Africa published a few years before 1885 will see a blank space where now are marked the towns, trading stations, roads, and railways which have come into being since the Conference of Berlin met; and more has probably been written about the Congo, its history, and its

[1] Princess Clémentine, daughter of Leopold II, married Prince Victor Jérome Napoléon in November 1910.

[2] Entrusted, by Papal Brief of January 1889, with a mission to the Congo.

resources, than about any other part of Central Africa.[1] This vast region, eighty times larger than Belgium, extending eastwards from its narrow outlet on the Atlantic at the mouth of the River Congo to Lake Tanganyika and the upper waters of the Nile, and from the French territories on the north to Rhodesia on the south, covered by thick low-lying forests or rising into mountain ranges through which the Congo, swollen by the smaller rivers which drain the uplands, forces a passage to the sea, was now to be administered from Brussels. Abounding in natural resources, copper, ivory, rubber, copra, palm-oil, cotton, coffee, rice, also gold and diamonds in some places, it was a mine of wealth ; and it is impossible to deny that the acquisition of wealth, rather than the civilisation of the natives, had been the first concern with most of the officials who had hitherto ruled over it. Any unprejudiced foreigner, however, who was living in Belgium in the year 1908 must have seen that a complete change was at hand. There was much irritation at outside criticism of Belgian management, deep suspicion of British designs, and not only incredulity, but in some circles lamentable indifference, about the reported sufferings of the natives ; but the country as a whole was determined that, as a Belgian Colony, the Congo must be governed so as to give no possible reason for reproach.

One great difficulty was that among the officials there were men who should never have held even subordinate positions. Political and private influence had far too much to do with appointments to places in the service of the Independent State. If some member of the Belgian Government, for example, had a son, perhaps a fast young officer, who was wasting his own time and his father's money in the night-houses of Brussels, or on the race-courses at Boitsfort and Groenendael, nothing could be easier than to ship him off to the Congo, where he might earn a commission on all the rubber and ivory he could wring out of the natives, and, free from control, be tempted to indulge in what Lord Granville had called during the Conference of Berlin " the worst impulses of human nature." Wholesale condemnation of the Congo officials would be unjust

[1] In one of the Handbooks (No. 99) prepared under the direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office there is a sufficient list of Authorities (*Belgian Congo*, p. 130). But, as this list was printed before the publication of Professor Keith's *The Belgian Congo and the Berlin Act*, that work is not mentioned. It should be read by everyone who desires information about the Congo. See also a paper on Belgian Colonial Administration read at a meeting of the Royal Colonial Institute on February 14, 1922, by D. Max Horn, Councillor of State, Belgium, and published in *United Empire*, the journal of the Colonial Institute, for March 1922.

and absurd; but many of them had been trained in the old methods, and could not be relied on to carry out the changes which were necessary if the Colony was to be put under an entirely new system of administration.

The first law providing for a new system was the "Colonial Charter," which was promulgated on October 18, 1908, after the Chambers had voted for the annexation, but a month before the cession actually took place. It ordained that the Colony was to have a personality distinct from that of the mother-country, that its finances were to be separate, but that Belgian subjects in the Congo, foreigners, and the native population were to enjoy the safeguards for individual liberty which are contained in the Belgian Constitution. The King, acting on the responsibility of his Ministers, was to exercise the legislative authority by decrees (*décrets*), and the executive authority by rules and ordinances (*règlements et arrêtés*). These instruments must be countersigned by a Minister; and the tribunals will not give effect to them unless they are in accordance with the law. There is a Minister for the Colony, and a Colonial Council of fourteen members, presided over by the Minister. Eight of the Councillors are nominated by the King, and six by the Chambers. At the head of the local administration in the Congo is a Governor-General appointed by the King, with Deputy-Governors of the four provinces into which the Colony has been divided.[1] The whole Colony is further subdivided into a number of districts, in each of which there is a Commissioner holding his office as a Crown appointment.

Before these changes were made Prince Albert had gone to the Congo, and travelled through the country from end to end, with an escort of only one officer, often marching on foot along the caravan routes, sleeping in the open, and facing the dangers of the tropics with the courage he was afterwards to show on the battle-fields of Flanders. "Our Colony," he said on his return to Belgium, "will be an important factor in the welfare of our country, whatever sacrifices we must make for its development. What we must do is to work for the moral regeneration of the natives, improve their material situation, suppress the scourge of sleeping sickness, and build new railways." M. Renkin, the Colonial Minister, also went to Africa, and after his investigations published a pamphlet explaining the reforms which he proposed to introduce. He declared that the accusations of cruelty and oppression brought against the Belgians were contrary to the truth. "In the course of his journey,"

[1] Kasai, Équateur, Province Orientale, and Katanga.

he said, "the Colonial Minister has seen and interrogated hundreds of chiefs. He permitted all the natives to approach him and speak freely to him. In this work of investigation he was assisted by the European interpreters, of whose independence and loyalty he was personally aware. He visited all the Missions, Catholic and Protestant without distinction, which he met on his route, and had long conversations with all the missionaries. He visited nearly all the factories, heard all the traders, officially interrogated all the competent officials, and no one pointed out to him either an act of cruelty or a systematic abuse committed by any servant of the Administration. Individual infractions are always possible on the part of officials, as they are on the part of private individuals. The Colonial Government tolerates none. Every abuse reported is the object of an immediate investigation, and indirect complaint has recently reached the Government against an official who in recruiting operations is said to have acted contrary to his formal instructions. An inquiry has been opened, and the Government is determined to assure on its territories respect for its authority, security for whites, and the guarantee of the rights of the natives." [1]

Without doubt this statement was made in perfect good faith. It is to be feared, however, that M. Renkin had not really heard the whole truth. It was one thing to allow the natives to speak freely, but quite another thing to be sure that they were not speaking with the fear of their masters before their eyes; and the fact that no act of cruelty of administrative abuse was pointed out by officials on the spot proved nothing. It was, moreover, only natural that M. Renkin should trust to what the Catholic missionaries told him. But the clergy, with only a few exceptions, not only in Belgium but also in other countries, always refused to admit that there were any abuses in the Congo, which the Holy See had placed under the care of an Apostolic Vicar; and M. Woeste, the Catholic leader, used all his influence against Vandervelde, Cattier, Lorand, and other Belgians who attacked the King's system. The best friend of Belgium must regretfully admit that there is a mass of evidence to prove that the evils complained of went far beyond mere occasional infractions of the law by individual officials.

For some time there had been very little good feeling in

[1] *The Congo Reforms, by a Belgian Minister: Suppression of Forced Labour; Introduction of Money Taxes; Abolition of Taxation in Kind.* Translation by J. De Courcy Macdonnell, p. 6.

Belgium for the English, or in England for the Belgians. During the South African War, when President Krüger came to Europe, the Transvaal Legation at Brussels was informed by the Government that his presence in Belgium was not desired; and M. de Favereau, the Foreign Minister, called England "the Torch of Civilisation" during a debate on the war.[1] But outside official circles public feeling was bitterly hostile to England; and when the Congo Reform Association was formed in March 1904, its attacks on King Leopold and his Ministers inflamed the passions which the South African struggle had excited. How can the English, it was asked, venture to accuse Belgians of atrocities in the Congo? We know from what their own countrymen have told us that they waged war in the Transvaal by methods of barbarism. Did not their own Press accuse them of intentional cruelty to the children of the Boers?[2] And at the same time public feeling against Belgium ran high in England. Casement's Report had been accepted as unanswerable evidence that abominable cruelties were inflicted on the natives of the Congo.[3] In 1909, after the cession to Belgium, his accusations were still believed without question. "Personally he is a man of the highest character, truthful, unselfish—one who is deeply respected by all who know him," was the testimony of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.[4] But since then it has been shown that it was a mistake to accept him as a trustworthy witness. Sir Basil Thomson, writing from personal knowledge, published an article expressing doubts as to whether any reliance could be placed on Casement's accuracy, and saying that he had always wondered how much exaggeration there was in his statements about the Congo. Sir William Haggard, under whom Casement served in three different consular posts, says that his statements were "always

[1] The writer happened to be in the Chamber during this debate, and noticed that whenever M. de Favereau spoke in praise of the British Government what he said was very ill received. A motion by M. Vandervelde, the effect of which, had it been carried, would have been to draw the Government from its neutral attitude, was defeated by only five votes.

[2] It had been suggested by an Opposition paper in London that the Government were educating the children in the Concentration Camps out of pure cruelty. "What the camps want is nurses, not teachers; women to keep the children alive and 'mother them,' and not drive knowledge into bloodless brains. The Government dread nurses, as they dread any extension of sympathy to these unhappy weaklings. Hating education, their idea probably is that in sending schoolmistresses they are applying a sort of punishment to the poor bairns" (*Daily News*, November 15, 1901).

[3] "Report from His Majesty's Consul at Boma respecting the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo, Africa, No. 1, 1904." Cd. 1933.

[4] Conan Doyle, *The Crime of the Congo*, p. 60.

unreliable," and adds, "I have never been able to understand how anyone who knew him at all could have given credence to his stories about the so-called 'Congo Atrocities,' which were taken, not only by the British public but by the authorities as Gospel truth, and acted on by the latter." [1]

All this raises a strong suspicion that, though the system of administration in the Congo was bad, Casement misled the British Government by gross exaggerations and even by pure inventions; and his treason during the war, when he acted as a German agent, has suggested that he was all along working in the interests of the Imperial Ministers, who had good reasons for wishing to concentrate the attention of Europe on the Congo, and direct it from their own colonial possessions. Prince Bismarck, before he yielded to the movement for the acquisition of Colonies by Germany, said that the Prussian bureaucratic system would not succeed in Africa; and in 1904, the year of Casement's Report, that system was producing in South-West Africa the same fruits as it had already produced in East Africa and the Cameroons. The Hereros had risen against their oppressors, and their rising was put down by methods so brutal that they cast into the shade the worst charges ever brought against Belgian rule in the Congo.

General Leutwein, who had been Governor of South-West Africa for eleven years, was accused of weakness in his treatment of the natives, and was superseded by General von Trotha. "This new Commander was noted in Berlin for his merciless severity in dealing with the natives. In the Chinese Boxer Rebellion he had carried out his Imperial master's instructions to the letter; and no more worthy son of Attila could have been selected for the work in hand. He had just suppressed the Arab Rebellion in German East Africa by bathing that country in the blood of thousands and thousands of its inhabitants, men, women, and children; and, his butchery there ended, he was ordered by Wilhelm II to proceed to German South-West Africa, and deal with the rebel natives." [2] He issued a proclamation, signed "Von Trotha, General of the Mighty Emperor," threatening to exterminate the Hereros. This threat was fulfilled without pity; and the sworn state-

[1] *The Times*, November 18, 1921. "Some years back," Sir William Haggard says, "I met an English officer who told me that he had travelled all over the Belgian Congo not long after Casement had been there, and that he could not discover any confirmation of his statements, which he characterised to me as a 'heap of lies.'"

[2] *Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and their Treatment by Germany* (Presented to Parliament in August 1918). Cd. 9146.

ments of the witnesses, whose evidence will be found in the Report, give a glimpse of dark deeds which it may well be imagined the Emperor William and his Ministers would fain have hidden from the light of day. We learn from the Report that the end of this campaign of extermination was that of between 80,000 and 90,000 souls only about 15,000 starving and fugitive Hereros were alive at the end of 1905, when Von Trotha relinquished his task.

The Imperial Government could not hide such a crime from the knowledge of the world. At this time the Press Department of the Foreign Office at Berlin had not so much influence as formerly over the newspapers ; and the Opposition deputies could not be silenced in the Reichstag. "A war like Herr von Trotha's can be waged by any butcher's boy," said Herr Bebel, who told the Ministers to their faces that their colonial policy was simply to conquer, oppress, and plunder the natives. It was impossible to conceal the tragedy of the Hereros and the cruel fate of every native race which had fallen under Prussian rule from the knowledge of the European Powers ; and the Imperial Government was forced to bring some of the offenders to trial and punish them. But it is very possible that the agitation against Belgian rule in the Congo was encouraged with the object of turning the eyes of Europe away from South-West Africa. Whether Casement and others who took a prominent part in attacking the Belgians were or were not inspired from Berlin, it is a significant fact that their voices were seldom if ever heard in condemnation of the German colonial system. If their object was to focus attention on the Congo they were entirely successful ; and no better means for leaving Germany a free hand in Africa could have been devised.

In the year 1909 the Congo question was one of the hinges on which the peace of Europe turned. On May 27, soon after the crisis caused by the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Hercegovina, Sir Edward Grey told the House of Commons that if it was rashly handled it might raise an even more serious European crisis. "Let us look this danger squarely in the face. Whence does it come ? " Sir Arthur Conan Doyle asked.[1] "Is it from Germany, with her traditions of kindly home-life —is this the Power which would raise a hand to help the butchers of the Mongalla [2] and of the Domaine de la Couronne ?

[1] *The Crime of the Congo*, p. 6.

[2] There had been abuses in Mongalla so serious that, in July 1904, the Government of the Independent State deprived the companies in that part of the Congo of their right to work it.

Is it likely that those who so justly admire the splendid public and private life of William II would draw the sword for Leopold?" There was, indeed, not the slightest reason to suppose that the Emperor William would go to war in defence of King Leopold's rule in the Congo. But it was from Germany that danger threatened. The Imperial Government had every reason for endeavouring to discredit Belgium in the eyes of the British people, so that when the time came for executing Count Schlieffen's plan of campaign against France, they might not readily go to war when the neutrality of Belgium was violated. Public feeling in Great Britain had been so thoroughly roused by the incessant propaganda of the Congo agitators that, in spite of all Belgian assurances that great reforms would be carried out, ominous hints were heard among members of that political party of which Sir Edward Grey was a distinguished leader that it would be well to repudiate the guarantee of Belgian independence.

The Anglo-French agreement of 1904 had been followed by those conversations with the French and Belgian Staffs during which Great Britain became bound in honour to give military assistance in the Low Countries when Germany violated the neutrality of Belgium. But this moral obligation could not be met unless Ministers were supported by Parliament and the nation; and injudicious action by the Foreign Office might have created so much friction between Belgium and Great Britain that the British people, completely alienated from the Belgians, would insist on remaining neutral. Then France, it was all but certain, would disappear from her place among the Great Powers, leaving Germany free to absorb Belgium, and not only dominate over Europe, but annex the French Colonies and the Congo. The Imperial Government had made haste to recognise the cession to Belgium, doubtless because the Congo would be an easy prey when it was the Colony of a small Power. Once there, as they soon would be were Great Britain to remain neutral, they would be the dominant Power in Central Africa, and in a position from which they could proceed to carry out their plans of further conquests.

It was therefore necessary to act cautiously, refuse to take so dangerous a step as a blockade of the river Congo, which was actually proposed in the House of Commons, and, above all things, in common fairness give the Belgian Cabinet time to prove their sincerity.[1]

[1] In the House of Commons the Member for one of the divisions of Oxfordshire spoke in favour of a "peaceful" blockade. "It is no use," Sir Edward

After the death of King Leopold, in December 1909, the whole influence of the Crown was on the side of colonial reforms. It was impossible to proceed except by degrees; but during the six years between the cession to Belgium and the outbreak of war remarkable progress was made. In January 1910 a Scottish missionary, who had spent seventeen years in Central Africa, wrote: "The old régime which was mainly responsible for the past undesirable state of things, and which is to-day deplored by both the Belgian Government and people alike, has, so far as the Katanga country is concerned, passed away for ever. To-day they can truthfully say in the face of every accuser, 'Nous avons changé tout cela.' In consideration of the fact that I was the chief aggressor, *in re* Katanga, in vigorously and mercilessly exposing the delinquencies of local officials, as well as in pointing out the radical reasons aback of the Government aberrations, seeing that the Comité Spécial du Katanga, which represents the Government, has wrought marvellous reforms, for which every European in the country is truly thankful, I feel it my duty to point out here that all agitation against the state of things that existed in the Congo formerly is to-day, so far as the Katanga country is concerned, *mal à propos*, and beside the mark." [1]

This refers to the Katanga district; but throughout the whole of the Colony the system was radically altered. Compulsory labour, that *travail forcé* which had been the greatest evil of the former system, was abolished. The taxes were paid in money instead of work. The produce of the soil was no longer claimed as a monopoly of the State; and trading companies which had enjoyed exclusive privileges were induced, after intricate negotiations, to surrender them. By July 1, 1912 the whole of the Congo was under the new régime.

The natives had suffered for many years from sleeping-sickness and smallpox, which seriously diminished the popula-

Grey replied, "talking about blockade. Blockade is blockade. It is the use of force, and if you are to have blockade you must be prepared to go to war, and a blockade at the mouth of the Congo means the blockade of a river which is not the property of the Congo or the Belgian Government. They have one bank of the river. It is a river which by international Treaty has been opened up to navigation, and if you are to blockade with any effect you must be prepared to stop every ship from going in and out of the Congo, whether under the Belgian, the French, the German, or whatever flag it is. Surely if you are going to pledge yourselves to take steps of that kind, and to accept responsibility for them, it is not too much to say that you must be prepared to raise a European question, and that it would be of the gravest kind" (*Hansard*, 1909, v. 1395).

[1] Letter from the Rev. D. Campbell in *The Times*, January 18, 1910.

tion. Before the cession to Belgium much had been done to combat these evils. Smallpox had been almost stamped out. But it was far more difficult to deal with sleeping-sickness; and in 1910 new and stringent rules were issued for discovering, isolating, and treating those who were suffering from the malady. Care was taken to impress on the natives the value of cleanliness as a means of preserving health; more than 3,000,000 francs a year were voted for the medical service; a large staff of doctors and nurses was enrolled; and a college for the study of tropical diseases was established at Brussels, with a laboratory for special research at Leopoldville in the Congo.[1]

The sale of distilled alcoholic drink to the natives, forbidden by the Act of the Conference of Brussels in 1890, was entirely suspended by a decree of August 1913; and, in order to encourage temperance among the colonists, the amount of spirits which the white population could import was limited to three litres per month for each person. Another decree forbade the sale of wine to the natives except on certain days, and within certain limited hours. Side by side with these measures for improving the health and morals of the community, a number of new churches and schools were founded. A system of technical education was introduced, including schools of agriculture, where the natives, particularly the sons of chiefs, were instructed in the planting and cultivation of trees.

The Colony, in which there are about five thousand different chiefships, has been divided into administrative districts under native chiefs elected by the inhabitants. Justice is administered on the principle that the same law applies both to the colonists and to the aboriginals. The jurisdiction in criminal cases, except those involving merely police offences, is in the hands of European judges; and the natives have the same right of appeal as the whites. The chiefs cannot inflict a higher penalty than imprisonment for fifteen days, nor, if native custom calls for corporal punishment, more than twelve strokes. From sentences pronounced by chiefs there is an appeal to the European authorities. Civil lawsuits between natives are mainly left to native judges, with an appeal to the higher Courts.

It was seen from the first that the progress of so large a territory must depend to a great extent on the means of com-

[1] Vigorous measures have been taken to prevent the spread of tuberculosis; and since August 1921 no person is allowed to enter the Congo without a medical certificate that he is free from this malady.

munication. The river Congo, a long stretch of which is navigated by ships of 500 tons burthen, is a magnificent waterway. On it and other rivers there was a regular service of steamers soon after the creation of the Independent State. But railways were necessary for the full development of the country, and before the cession to Belgium a line had been constructed from near Boma to Léopoldville. In 1909, when the Cape Railway, passing through Broken Hill in Rhodesia, had reached the Katanga district, a Belgian company contracted to make a line to Elisabethville, which was in working order in 1912. Since then the railway system has been extended; and, in spite of the difficulty in procuring materials owing to the war, an important branch, leading to Lake Tanganyika, was opened in 1917. The fact that more than 1,500 miles of railways have been laid within a few years shows in how enterprising a spirit the Belgians, who built the first railway on the European continent, have dealt with the opening of communications through their African Colony.

At the end of May 1913 Sir Edward Grey announced in the House of Commons that Great Britain was no longer justified in refusing to recognise the annexation of the Congo by Belgium; and next month recognition was formally accorded.

A year later, in July 1914, the Congo was as peaceful as any of the Belgian provinces in Europe. The Powers who signed the Berlin Act of 1885 had bound themselves to respect the neutrality of the Congo and other territories in Tropical Africa, so long as the Powers which exercised rights of sovereignty or protectorate in those territories, "using their option of proclaiming themselves neutral," fulfilled their obligations of neutrality. When the war began the Cabinet of Brussels tried to maintain peace in Africa. Three days after the Germans entered Belgium a telegram was sent from Brussels to M. Fuchs, the Governor-General of the Congo, instructing him to take all precautions to preserve neutrality; and at the same time, on August 7, M. Davignon directed the Belgian Ministers in London and Paris to ask the British and French Governments whether they intended to proclaim the neutrality of their Colonies. "Belgium," he said, "hopes that the war will not be extended to Central Africa."

The French Cabinet were at first in favour of proclaiming neutrality. But very soon the French and British Governments saw that it would be impossible to prevent the war spreading to Central Africa. Already, on August 2, the day on

which the neutrality of Luxembourg was violated and the ultimatum was presented at Brussels, the Governor of German East Africa had given the order for mobilisation. On August 14, when many of the Belgians in the Congo had only just heard that war had been declared in Europe, German forces fired without warning on the outposts on Lake Kivu. On August 17 they sank a number of canoes on Lake Tanganyika, and cut the telegraph wires between Uvira and Kasongo. On August 22 they attacked Lukuga, and destroyed the only Belgian boat on Tanganyika. Before this troops from German East Africa had attacked the British East African Protectorate; British troops had destroyed the German wireless station at Dar-es-Salaam; and France was about to recover that part of the Congo which she had been compelled to give up in 1911, at the time of the Agadir incident. In view of all that was happening none of the belligerents in the European War could be neutral in Africa; and in a short time Belgian troops were actively engaged against the Germans who were attacking French Ubangi.[1]

The Belgians took part also in the defence of Uganda and Rhodesia; but their principal contribution to the war in the Tropics was their offensive against German East Africa. It began in April 1916, when, after the position of the Allies on Lakes Tanganyika and Kivu had been made secure, the Belgian forces, led by General Tombeur, advanced from the west, while General Smuts was attacking the enemy on the north and east. On September 18, when, after nearly six months of hard fighting and long marching over difficult country, two Belgian columns joined forces before Tabora, the capital of German East Africa, the Germans retired to the east. Next day the Belgians entered, and set free nearly 200 British, French, and Italian prisoners.

After the capture of Tabora the Belgian Colonial Government intended to demobilise most of the native troops, and send the European officers home to join the army on the Yser in Flanders. But the enemy, though broken up and driven to the south, was not yet beaten; and Belgian forces served with distinction in that series of brilliant operations by which General Smuts,

[1] As to a Note which the Imperial Government addressed to the American Ambassador at Berlin professing willingness to neutralise the Congo basin, on August 22, but of which the Belgian Government did not hear till September 25, see M. Davignon to Baron Grenier (Belgian Minister at Madrid), October 21, 1914: *Second Belgian Grey Book*, No. 58. Germany, says Baron Beyens, "s'avisait trop tard de mettre ses colonies à couvert de la vengeance des Alliés" (*La Question Africaine*, p. 77).

General van Deventer, and their staff of British officers, completed the conquest of German East Africa.[1]

At the Peace Conference of 1919 the Supreme Council proposed that Great Britain should receive a mandate for the whole of German East Africa. But the Belgians, who had now occupied and administered the native Kingdoms of Ruanda and Urundi, and the country as far as Tabora, for more than two years, resisted this settlement—which calmly ignored the part they had taken in the conquest of German East Africa—demanded recognition of their services, refused to sign the Treaty if their claim to share in the fruits of the victory to which they had so greatly contributed was not acknowledged, and, in the end, obtained a mandate for Urundi and the greater part of Ruanda. These fertile territories, formerly the north-western part of German East Africa, have a native population of about 3,000,000, and are of great value, especially for cattle-raising; but a more equitable arrangement would have been to include within the Belgian mandate the whole of the district occupied by the Congo forces after September 1916.

During the war the development of the Congo Colony continued with scarcely any interruption. At the end of 1914 commercial firms began to transfer their head offices to England, where no fewer than thirty-seven Belgian companies were soon engaged in business. The Colonial Government, having forbidden the export of gold and silver coin, introduced as early as October 1914 the compulsory currency of notes issued by the Banque du Congo Belge. At the beginning of 1915 the exchange, in consequence of the judicious management of the Belgian financiers, was at the favourable rate of 25 francs 50 centimes for the pound sterling in London.

The export and import trade increased. Large quantities of copper and other products were exported for the use of the Allies. Tables prepared by the Belgian Government showed that the imports rose, between 1915 and 1916, 62 per cent. as regarded the quantity of goods imported, and 97 per cent. as regards their value.[2] Internally the policy of the Government was to make the Colony, as far as possible, self-supporting; and the natives were encouraged to start productive plantations, which would give immediate results both for local consump-

[1] *La Campagne Anglo-Belge de l'Afrique Orientale Allemande*, by M. Charles Stiénon, with a Preface by Baron de Broqueville, is the best Belgian account of the campaign of 1916–17.

[2] *Economic Development of the Belgian Congo*, by M. J. Geerinckx, Attaché to the Commercial Intelligence Department of the Belgian Colonial Office, p. 2.

tion and for export. The result was that, through the energy and skill of the Colonial Government, the Congo flourished more than ever between 1914 and 1918.

The return of peace has been followed by further progress. The revenue has increased. The public debt is not oppressive ; and it may be noted that the interest on sums advanced by Great Britain and France has been punctually paid. The balance of trade is in favour of the Congo, where there is a lucrative field for British trade, if British commercial houses act in concert with Belgian firms. " It is only by the frankest co-operation and identification with Belgian organisations that British firms can hope to obtain large financial and commercial interests in the Colony. Plenty of opportunities should, however, be available for obtaining important subsidising contracts for the construction of public works and factories, and the provisions of machinery and material, and British manufacturers will be well advised to keep in close touch with this significant development of Belgian enterprise." [1]

Frank co-operation was difficult before the war, especially in the famous Katanga district bordering on Rhodesia, which the officials would have liked to close against British subjects.

Since the war Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa have been suspected of aiming at the annexation of the Katanga, or at least of a design to make British influence supreme in that part of the Congo Colony. Control by Great Britain of the railway from Dar-es-Salaam to Lake Tanganyika ; the partition of Ruanda in order to secure a passage for the Cape to Cairo line through the strip of land assigned by mandate to Great Britain ; the exclusion of Belgium from the Tabora region ; the fact that the Katanga is almost surrounded on three sides by British territory ; and the large investments of British capital in that province ; all these circumstances have unfortunately produced among some of the Belgians a deep distrust of Great Britain as a neighbour in Africa. One writer in the press of Brussels has gone so far as to say that the best defence against what he describes as the British thirst for territory would be the restoration of the German Colonies.[2]

[1] *Report on the Economic Situation of Belgium at the end of* 1921, *with an Annex on the Trade and Industry of the Congo* (revised to 1922), by Mr. R. F. H. Duke, C.B.E., Commercial Secretary of the British Embassy at Brussels, p. 133.

[2] " Il y a danger pour un pays à n'avoir, sur la majeure partie de ses énormes frontières, qu'un seul voisin, qu'un seul rival. Et, dans le cas présent, ce voisin est particulièrement vorace, impérialiste, assoiffé de développement territorial. A ce point de vue, j'en suis arrivé à la conviction très nette, qu'il serait de notre

A traveller through Central Africa gives an interesting glimpse of Elisabethville, the chief town of the Katanga: "When I rode in a motor-car down Elisabethville's broad, electric-lighted avenues, and saw smartly dressed women on the side-walks, beheld Belgians playing tennis on well-laid courts on one side, and Englishmen at golf on the other, it was difficult to believe that ten years ago this was the bush. I kept saying to myself, 'Is this really the Congo?' Everywhere I heard English spoken. This was due to the large British interest in the Union Minière and the presence of so many American engineers. The Katanga is, with the exception of certain palm-fruit areas, the bulwark of British interests in the Congo. The American domain is the Upper Kasai district."[1] This is a change from the time, little more than twelve years ago, when about thirty white settlers were living in huts on waste lands where now there is a town with a population of nearly 2,000 Europeans and 12,000 natives. In this district, which has been described as one huge copper-mine, the most important company is the Union Minière du Haut Katanga, now holding the concessions granted in 1900 and 1905 to Mr. Robert Williams, the friend of Cecil Rhodes, for the development of the copper and other mineral industries. Besides copper there are valuable deposits of iron and tin, the exploitation of which is, however, now only beginning.[2]

The Katanga lies at an elevation averaging 5,000 feet above sea-level, and its features resemble those of Rhodesia. The heat, though great, is not so trying as in some other tropical countries; and efforts have been made by the Government at Brussels to develop its agricultural resources by sending out Belgian farmers and settling them on the land. So far this experiment has not succeeded, owing apparently to the reluctance of many Belgians to leave Europe; and, except in sheep and cattle raising, the farming industry has made little progress.

In the Congo, as in every African Colony, the great difficulty is the question of native labour, without which there can be

intérêt que l'on rendît à l'Allemagne ses colonies africaines, celle de l'est en particulier" (*Le Soir*, October 31, 1922).

[1] Marcosson, *An African Adventure*, pp. 148, 149.

[2] In 1900 the "Comité Spécial du Katanga" was appointed to manage all the affairs of this territory except the administration of law, taxes, and the postal services. The Katanga was closed except to Companies which obtained concessions from the Comité; but since the cession to Belgium the powers of the Comité have been diminished, concessions have been freely granted, and development by the State alone has ceased. As to the Katanga see Keith, *The Belgian Congo and the Berlin Act*, pp. 83–91.

no progress. In 1911 Sir William Lever, afterwards Lord Leverhulme, obtained a concession for extensive palm-forests; and the "Huileries du Congo Belge," a branch of the important Lever establishments in England, has erected factories in several parts of the Congo, where an immense business is done in the production of palm-oil for use in making soap. Thousands of natives are employed; and the Lever Company has made a point of paying good and regular wages, besides doing much to promote the welfare of the labourers. But the natives have a rooted dislike to work. Though after the annexation of the Congo by Belgium the State and companies holding concessions under it ceased to be the only employers of labour, it appeared from some of the Consular Reports that the collection of rubber by forced labour still continued, and that the humane principles of the Colonial Charter were being violated by private persons. The Belgian Government desired to put an end to this. A Royal Commission of inquiry was appointed; and in 1919 a Report was presented which recommended the adoption of measures in favour of the natives.[1] The problems connected with the questions of native labour, which the Belgian Colonial Office is thus trying to solve, are nearly the same as those to which attention was called in the Memorandum laid before Lord Milner by the Mission Council of the Church of Scotland in December 1920, when it was stated that compulsory labour had been a fact for years in British East Africa, and that it still continued, not merely on public works, as provided for by law, but also on behalf of private interests.

In the Congo this question still presents almost insuperable difficulties, as it did in the days of the Independent State. Now, under Belgian rule, a native cannot be employed except under a written contract. He must be paid monthly. He must be housed and fed. If engaged for more than three months the terms under which he is to work must be explained to him by an official of the Government. He can come and go almost as he pleases. "Belgian rule in the Congo," the author of *An African Adventure* says, "has swung round to another extreme, for the negro there has more freedom of movement and less responsibility for action than in any other African Colony."[2] But unfortunately this sudden change of system has been followed by an increase of indolence, and the growth

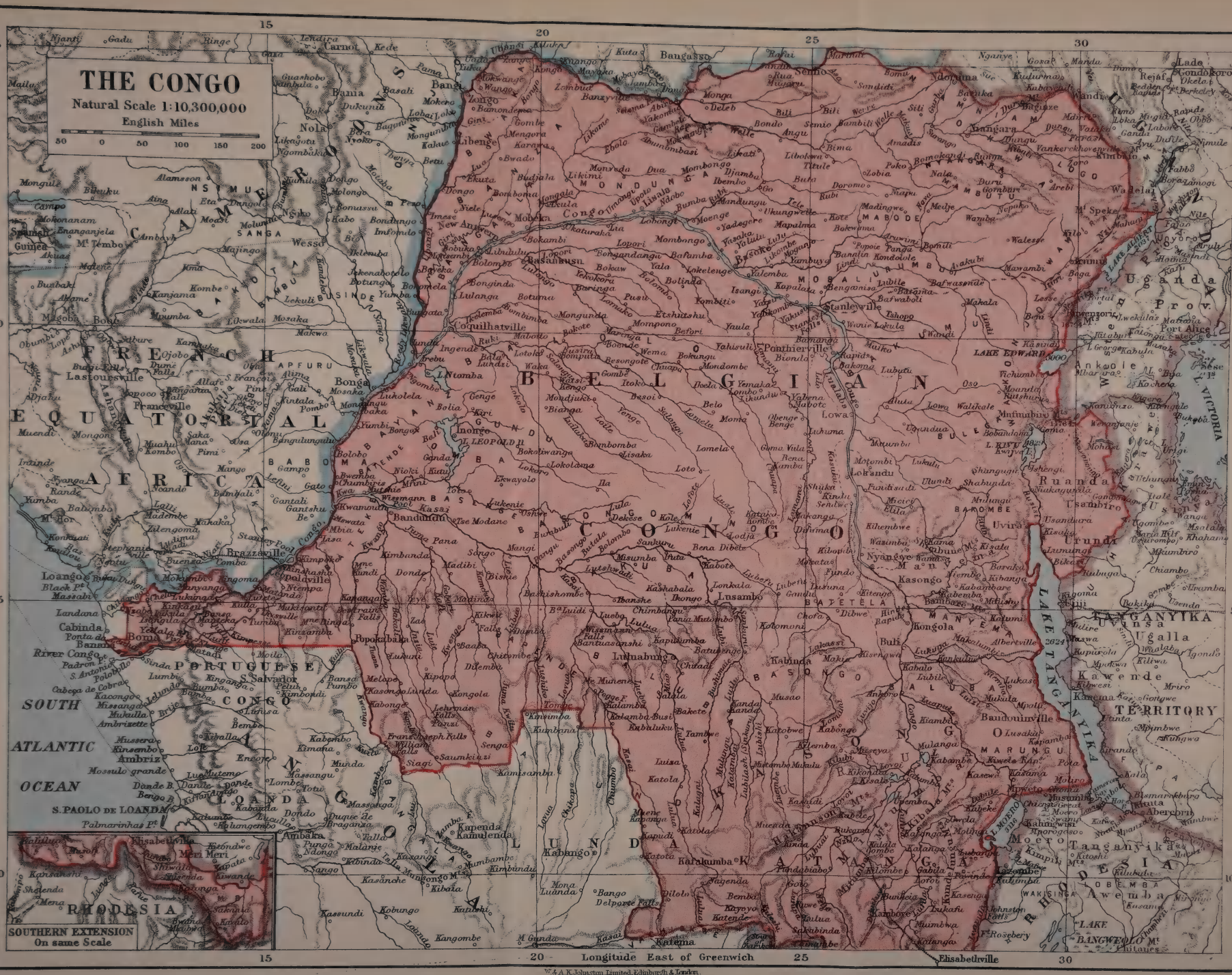
[1] *Rapport au Roi de la Commission Instituée pour la Protection des Indigènes*, Léopoldville, Décembre 18, 1919.

[2] Marcosson, ib., p. 148.

of a want of respect for the white man, who is sometimes treated with insolence by ignorant savages, who need a very firm hand over them, and by whom leniency and kind treatment are taken for signs of weakness. The truth is that long years must pass before civilisation can spread over this vast territory and the white settlers can bring the natives to see that they will be healthier and happier under a civilised European Government than their forefathers were in the days of barbarism, tribal wars, raids by slave-traders, and cannibalism. Whatever errors the Belgians may have committed in their first colonial experiments, they did nothing worse than other European States have done in the early days of their expansion beyond the seas; and already they have given many proofs that in developing the Congo they will not only add immensely to their own economic resources, but will, besides maintaining peace and order, continue to carry out the humane rules of administration set forth in their Colonial Charter, with the various laws which have followed it, and thus justify the position they occupy in Central Africa.

NOTE

Since the map of the Congo here given was printed, the arrangement by which the native kingdom of Ruanda was divided, under mandate, between Great Britain and Belgium (see p. 174) has been abrogated, and the whole of that district, bounded on the east by the river Kagera, is now under Belgian mandate.


THE CONGO
Natural Scale 1:10,300,000
English Miles
50 0 50 100 150 200
SOUTHERN EXTENSION
On same Scale
Longitude East of Greenwich
Elisabethville
BELGIAN CONGO
FRENCH EQUATORIAL AFRICA
PORTUGUESE SOUTH CONGO
ANGOLA
RHODESIA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Uganda Prot.
TANGANYIKA TERRITORY
Ruanda
Urundi
LAKE TANGANYIKA
LAKE VICTORIA
LAKE EDWARD
LAKE ALBERT
LAKE KIVU
LAKE BANGWEOLO
Leopoldville
Stanleyville
Coquilhatville
Ponthierville
Bukama
Elisabethville
Kabalo
Albertville
Baudouinville
Kongola
Lusambo
Luluabourg
Bandundu
Port Alice
Port Bell
Kampala
Entebbe
Jinja
Mbarara
Fort Portal
Kisumu
Nairobi
Mombasa
Tanga
Dar es Salaam
Lindi
Beira
Lourenco Marques
Broken Hill
Ndola
Abercorn
Fort Rosebery
Kasama
Fort Jameson
Fort Manning
Fort Johnston
Zomba
Blantyre
Port Herald
Salisbury
Umtali
Gwelo
Bulawayo
Livingstone
Victoria Falls
Wankie
Sinoia
Lusaka
Kafue
Kalomo
Mazoe
Tete
Quelimane
Chinde
Luabo
Inhambane
Beira
Chimoio
Vila Pery
Vila Gouveia
Vila Luso
Vila Norton
Vila Cabral
Vila Bocage
Vila Serpa Pinto
Vila Teixeira da Silva
Vila Nova de Armada
Vila Arriaga
Vila Roçadas
Vila Paiva Couceiro
Vila Machado
Vila Nova da Rainha
Vila Henrique de Carvalho
Vila Luso

CHAPTER XIV

LUXEMBOURG, 1914–1923

In the spring of 1914 the people of the Grand Duchy believed that their country, small and unarmed though it was, could rest in security behind three parchment bulwarks. Perpetual neutrality had been guaranteed by Great Britain, France, Germany, and the other Powers who signed the Treaty of 1867. Germany had, by the Treaty of 1872, given a special pledge that the railways would never be used for the purposes of war. In 1907 one of The Hague Conventions had declared the territory of neutrals to be inviolable, and that the troops of belligerents must never pass across it. But in June, after the tragedy of Sarajevo, it was noticed that Prussian officers of high rank were visiting the town of Luxembourg, and next month alarm was caused by a concentration of German troops on the right bank of the Moselle. They were gathering opposite Remich, the picturesque little town, surrounded by vineyards, flower-gardens and orchards, which is connected by a bridge with the German side of the river. It was the same opposite Gravenmacher, another small town, lying in a hollow a few miles further down, and at Wasserbillig, where the Moselle turns towards Trèves. On July 31 the bridges over the Moselle were barricaded by German troops, who also took possession of the station at Trois Vierges, in the north of the Grand Duchy, whence the main railway line runs through into France.

There could be very little doubt what the object of these operations was; and M. Eyschen sent several telegrams to Berlin asking for an assurance that the neutrality of the Grand Duchy would be respected. No answer was returned; and early in the morning of August 2 armoured trains carrying soldiers and ammunition entered the Grand Duchy by the bridges over the Moselle and along the railway from Trois Vierges. By the afternoon of that day a number of military trains were in the station at Luxembourg; and, the invasion having been carried out, a proclamation, which the German Commander had brought with him ready printed from Coblenz,

was issued. "All the most strenuous efforts," it said, "of His Majesty, the Emperor of Germany, to preserve peace have failed, France having violated the neutrality of Luxembourg, and opened hostilities, as is proved without the smallest doubt, from Luxembourg territory against the German troops. In view of this urgent necessity His Majesty has ordered the German troops of the first line, the Ninth Army Corps, to enter Luxembourg."

As everyone in Luxembourg knew, the only true statement in this proclamation was that the Emperor had ordered his troops to enter. The rest of it was a barefaced lie. The French had not violated the neutrality of Luxembourg. On the contrary, they had torn up the railway on their own side of the frontier, and had ordered their troops not to approach the Grand Duchy; but, though M. Eyschen informed the Government at Berlin of the facts, trains full of soldiers singing "Deutschland über Alles" passed through hour after hour, and the General Staff, with the Emperor himself, the Chancellor, Herr von Jagow, and other personages, took up their quarters in the town of Luxembourg. "The invasion of Luxembourg," it has been truly said, "in the face of all the Treaties which made its existence tenable, was of an importance quite out of proportion to the magnitude of the territory involved. It was a reversion to Force, to purely primitive means of reaching a desired end." [1]

Though the Imperial Government asserted that they would treat the Grand Duchy as a neutral State, they insisted that the French and Belgian Ministers, M. Mollard and the Comte Jehay van der Steen, must leave. But they were not guilty of outrages such as those which disgraced their armies a few miles away in Belgian Luxembourg. Factories, however, were commandeered, and used as munitions works. Goods were requisitioned. They were sometimes paid for; but the owners were generally put off with promises to pay at some future date, or were forced to allow their property to be taken without obtaining any receipt. Much damage was done to orchards and gardens by cutting down fruit-trees and making earthworks in preparation for a possible attack by France. There were domiciliary visits, and many cases of the arbitrary arrest, imprisonment, and harsh treatment of persons against whom no charge was ever brought. The domineering rudeness of the officers was so offensive that the old hatred of the Prussians was now extended to all Germans. A well-informed pamphlet,

[1] Putnam, *Luxembourg and her Neighbours*, p. 17.

published at Paris during the war, mentions the curious fact that in the party disputes between the Ministry and the Opposition—there was no Coalition Government in Luxembourg—each accused the other of pro-Germanism, though the members of both were, with very few exceptions, hoping that Germany would be defeated.[1]

The author of this pamphlet explains that the Opposition accused the Government of being on the side of Germany "parce qu'ils ne sont pas tout à fait detachés encore de la Grande-duchesse." For some time the Grand Duchess Marie Adelaide had not been so well-beloved as when her reign began. Mr. Francis Gribble describes how he saw her at a village fête shortly before the war. "It was impossible," he says, "not to admire. She bore, without a trace of self-consciousness, her blushing honours as the most beautiful princess in Europe, sitting serenely, with her beautiful sisters and her chaperon, in the little band-stand in the village square." But he observed that there was less enthusiasm than might have been expected among the villagers; and some of his Luxembourg friends told him why. "Yes," they said, "she's pretty, very pretty indeed; but she isn't really popular. We've nothing against her—nothing definite, that is to say; but you see—she's too fond of Prussians."[2]

Early in the war a story spread through Europe that the Grand Duchess had tried to prevent the entrance of the Germans, that she had defied their Generals and refused to receive the Emperor, that she was a prisoner in her Palace, and that she had thrown herself at the foot of the Cross, weeping, and vowing that she would retire to a convent rather than submit to the invaders. But the truth was that the ties of family connection, and the personal influence of the Emperor and of her household, had been too strong. On August 3 she entertained a party of German officers. She received the Emperor, drove out with him to watch the bombardment of Longwy, and gave a banquet in his honour, at which she drank a toast to "the success of the noble German army." She paid several visits to German Courts during the war; and the betrothal of one of her sisters to Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, when he was

[1] "*Boche* est devenu depuis la guerre une injure pire encore que *Prussien* auparavant, elle est employée inconsidérément dans les luttes intérieures, plus aigües chez nous que partout ailleurs, et que les évènements n'ont malheureusement pas interrompues ni apaisées. Aucune union sacrée là bas. Chaque individu accuse son adversaire politique de penser autrement" (*La Question du Luxembourg* (1917), p. 23).

[2] Gribble, *In Luxemburg in War Time*, p. 39.

in command against the Belgian army, gave such deep offence to her subjects that in November 1918, when the Imperial forces had left the Grand Duchy, it was evident that her dethronement was only a question of time.

The defiance of public international law by the Imperial Government when they violated the neutrality of Luxembourg, and the cynical breach of a private contract of which they were guilty when they used the railways to carry their troops into France, made the future of the Grand Duchy a matter of importance to France and Belgium, as well as to the Luxembourgers themselves. It also concerned the general peace of Europe that the " Gap of Luxembourg " should be closed against another inroad ; and in the winter of 1918–19 the problem of what had best be done was discussed. One proposal was that the country should remain an independent State, but should, like Belgium, be relieved from the obligation of perpetual neutrality, and left free to form military alliances, erect fortifications, and maintain an army.[1] Another proposal was that there should be some form of union with either France or Belgium.

Though a section of the Luxembourgers would probably have accepted incorporation in either France or Belgium, the majority wished to remain independent. Failing that, the natural course, on historical grounds, was reunion with Belgium. Among the Belgians there were many who hoped that this would come to pass ; for the unpopularity of the Grand Duchess made it all but certain that she would soon cease to reign, and perhaps the dynasty, which had no firm roots in the soil, might fall with her. In that case Luxembourg might be restored to Belgium ; or, if a complete fusion of the two countries was found to be impossible, there might be what was called the " personal union," which meant that Luxembourg was to remain an autonomous State, but with the King of the Belgians as Grand Duke.

While these topics were being discussed on all sides there was a sitting of the Chamber at which the question of the dynasty was debated. A majority of the deputies were of the clerical party. They had always supported the Grand Duchess, but were now beginning to see that she had lost the

[1] By the Treaty of May 1867 (Article V) the Grand Duke undertook that the fortifications of Luxembourg should not be restored in future, and that no military establishment should be maintained there. A small force of militia was embodied, under a law of 1868, to maintain order ; but there was no regular army.

affections of the people. The Liberal party included many of the higher classes, also mine and factory owners, lawyers, and other professional men. They were out of sympathy with the reigning dynasty, because it was supported by the clergy. Some of them were ready for reunion with Belgium, either incorporation pure and simple, or the "personal union"; but the majority were in favour of remaining independent. The Socialist deputies, most of them working men, were republican in sentiment, and prepared for union with France; but they seemed to fear that a Republic would not succeed in Luxembourg. They had evidently not made up their minds; and, in spite of their very decided leaning towards the French connection, the idea of returning to Belgium had, it was apparent, made some impression on them. But, on the whole, they, like the Catholics and Liberals, preferred independence to any other solution.

Three proposals were laid before the Chamber. The Catholic leaders moved that the dynastic question should be decided by a plébiscite; and this motion, which the Socialists supported, was carried. M. Brasseur, leader of the Liberals, proposed that the Grand Duchess should be called upon to abdicate. This was defeated, but only by one vote. A third proposal, made by M. Prum, deputy for Clervaux, that the Grand Duchess should cease to wield the executive authority till after the plébiscite, was adopted. The effect of this decision was that, though she continued to reign, the exercise of her chief function as a ruler was suspended.

In addition to these parties in the Chamber there was a French party in the country. Before the war this party had been active. M. Mollard, when French Minister at Luxembourg, had been industrious and influential, entertained on a considerable scale, spent money freely, and was understood to have founded the "Alliance Française," a literary and artistic society, with, however, a substratum of political propaganda in the interests of France. After he left Luxembourg in August 1914 he went to Paris, where he was said to be working for the annexation of the Grand Duchy by France. Articles published in Paris in favour of the annexation were believed to be inspired and paid for by him.

Rumours that France had revived the plan of Napoleon III, and aimed at acquiring Luxembourg, were current in November and December 1918, and gave rise to uneasiness in Belgian circles, where it had been hoped that, after the war, the Grand Duchy would come under the influence of Belgium, even if

a complete reunion was not accomplished. This feeling of uneasiness was increased by the action of Marshal Foch after the Armistice was signed. In June 1917 M. Ribot had assured the Belgian Minister at Paris that the annexation of Luxembourg was not one of the French war aims; and after an exchange of letters it was understood at the Foreign Office in Brussels that, if the international status of the Grand Duchy were altered, France would not interfere, but would leave Belgium with a free hand. During the preliminary arrangements for the Peace Conference the Cabinet of Brussels, on the strength of what had taken place in 1917, wished and expected to occupy Luxembourg as a sector of the Belgian army; but the French Government said that this, as a military question, must be settled by Marshal Foch, who decided that the Grand Duchy was to be in the zone of the United States army. This was natural, as General Pershing's force had been operating in the Argonne; but immediately after the American troops arrived at Luxembourg a French regiment, the 109th of the Line, marched in. The Americans objected; but Marshal Foch fixed his headquarters at Luxembourg, and appointed a French military governor, General Latour. The telegraph and telephone services were put under the control of the French authorities; a request that a Belgian force might enter was refused; and when King Albert visited Arlon, the capital of Belgian Luxembourg, it was with difficulty that leave was obtained for some Belgian troops to meet him there.

Like Marshal Foch, the officers and men of the 109th regiment were devout Catholics. They went to the services of the Church regularly, which tended to produce a belief that France could not, after all, be so very anti-clerical—an important matter in so Catholic a country as Luxembourg. At the same time the French officers gave concerts, plays, and balls, and made themselves very popular. The effect of all this was soon apparent. Newspapers began to write in favour of joining France, and were eagerly read by the French party, most of whom were professors, teachers, and young men who had studied at schools and universities in France. They called for union with France if the Grand Duchess abdicated; and among those who had been looking forward either to maintaining the independence of the country or to some form of union with Belgium, suspicion grew that the presence of the French troops was designed to prepare the way for annexation by France. They feared that Luxembourg was to be used as a stepping-stone on the way to the Rhine frontier.

This was the situation in the Grand Duchy when the year 1919 opened. The valley of the Meuse was a scene of desolation, studded with shattered towns, villages, and farms. At Namur the Hôtel de Ville and many houses had been set on fire and destroyed. Dinant, where 700 civilians, including women and children, were massacred in cold blood, where public buildings were wrecked, and where almost all the private dwellings were pillaged and burned to the ground, was a heap of ruins. For mile after mile, from Liége to Hastière, the whole country had been laid waste. Outside the Province of Namur in Belgian Luxembourg 3,000 homes are said to have been burned and 1,200 of the civilian population put to death.[1] But a few miles beyond Arlon, at the frontier of the Grand Duchy, there was a complete change in the aspect of the country, and one saw no ruins or other signs of war. The town of Luxembourg was intact. All seemed quiet. French and American soldiers strolled about the streets, or listened to the band playing in the Place d'Armes, while their officers frequented the spacious Hôtel Brasseur, where the Belgian Minister, Prince Albert de Ligne, was living.

Though the position of the Grand Duchess was anomalous, and could not last much longer, there were few signs of unrest till after the return from Paris of a deputation which had gone there to invite French intervention in settling the future of the country. The Chamber met on the afternoon of January 11. M. Brasseur, leader of the Liberals, opened the proceedings by declaring that the time had come when the Grand Duchess must abdicate. A Member of the Right moved the adjournment of the debate for half an hour, to await the arrival of a communication from the Palace which would, he said, make further discussion unnecessary. The natural meaning of this was that the Grand Duchess was about to announce that she resigned the throne. But the spectators in the public galleries, suspecting that the motion for an adjournment was an attempt by the Government to delay a decision on the dynastic question, protested, sang the "Marseillaise," and were so disorderly that the President, with all the members of the Right, left the Chamber. The Socialists then tried to carry out a *coup d'état* by proclaiming the Republic, and proposed the appointment of a "Committee of Public Safety." Seven

[1] One morning at Arlon 118 civilians brought from Rossignol, a village in the neighbourhood (which had been burned down a few hours before) were put against a wall, and shot in groups of ten. Among them was a Madame Huriaux, the mother of three children, who fell crying "Vive la France."

deputies were nominated to act as a Committee ; but three of them refused to take part in establishing a Republic till the people of Luxembourg had made known their wishes. On the following day the Government issued a proclamation calling on all citizens to maintain order, and declaring that the preservation of the dynasty was essential to the independence of the country.

On January 15 it was announced that the Grand Duchess Marie Adelaide had abdicated, and her sister, Princess Charlotte Adelgonde, was accepted as Grand Duchess by the Chamber.[1] Though the Chamber had thus recognised the continuance of the dynasty, and though the agitation for a Republic was confined to a mere fraction of the population, the Ministers were of opinion that the future form of government must be finally settled by a referendum ; and in April a law was passed providing for a plébiscite to decide that question, and also, Luxembourg having broken away from the Zollverein, the question of a Customs Union with either France or Belgium. In May a letter from the Prince de Ligne was read to the Chamber announcing that King Albert was not, and did not intend to become, a candidate for the Grand Ducal throne. He also intimated that the Council of Four at Paris desired the postponement of the plébiscite for a time. This was agreed to ; and for six months the proposed Customs Union was discussed in Luxembourg, France, and Belgium.

The economic resources of Luxembourg were great in proportion to the small size of the country. Farming flourished ; and the agriculturists, many of whom were peasant landowners, grew wheat, flax, tobacco, and other crops with extraordinary success. Cattle-breeding was another source of wealth. Orchards were prolific ; and in most seasons the grape harvest gave heavy returns, yielding a large quantity of excellent wine, especially on the Moselle. There was a constant output of manufactured articles, such as gloves, linen, pottery, and tanned leather, in which a lucrative export trade was carried on. The production of iron was, however, the most important industry. The yearly output of cast-iron and steel amounted to many thousands of tons. But there were no coal-mines in the Grand Duchy. Coal being necessary for the metal industry, one great reason why Luxembourg should

[1] The Grand Duchess Marie Adelaide entered a Carmelite convent at Modena. Her sister was twenty-two years of age at the time of her accession, and had lately become engaged to Prince Félix of Bourbon-Parma, whom she afterwards married.

conclude an economic alliance with one or other of her neighbours was the need for importing coal in order to maintain the iron and steel works, which would have to be closed if the raw material left the country to be manufactured elsewhere.

Opinions seemed to be divided as to whether France or Belgium would be the better partner in an economic union. The wine districts undoubtedly favoured the Belgian solution, because they could not sell their wines in France, but found a market for them in Belgium. The farmers, on the other hand, counted on obtaining a higher price for their produce in France than in Belgium. But they alone would profit by this. The general public saw that they were sure to suffer from the rise in the price of all commodities which the introduction of the French protective system would bring about; and, though the farmer might sell his own produce at a high figure, he would, if prices rose in consequence of a Customs Union with France, have to pay more for other things which he required. Luxembourg had always imported coal from Belgium; and it was known that the Belgian production would be largely increased by the development of the mines in the Campine.[1] This was an argument in favour of an economic agreement with Belgium, which would be able to supply the iron and steel works in Luxembourg with what they must have if their industry was to be carried on. It was felt, moreover, that, since the mines and ironworks of Alsace and Lorraine were on the eve of restoration to France, the French would, if they obtained command of the mineral resources of Luxembourg, and also, as seemed likely, had control of the coal-mines and steel output of the Saar district, possess almost a monopoly, and could impose their own conditions on the metal industries of the Grand Duchy. But, on the whole, the steel industry was in favour of a Customs Union with France.

In May 1919 negotiations on the economic question began between Belgium and Luxembourg. The French propaganda, however, continued; and it was said that, behind the scenes, members of the Luxembourg Government were working secretly in the French interest. Representations on behalf of Belgium were made at Paris to Marshal Foch and to several of the French statesmen. M. Loucheur was in favour of stopping the propaganda, which was causing friction between France and Belgium, on two conditions. The first was that there should be a cartel in the metal industry between France, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Belgium might have joined this

[1] *Infra*, p. 228.

combination, which would control the metal output of Belgium, Luxembourg, Alsace-Lorraine, the Saar, and also certain iron-fields in the Rhineland. But the second condition was that the French should have complete control of the Guillaume-Luxembourg railway system, as they already had of the lines in Alsace-Lorraine; and to this condition, which, though it was of great strategic importance to France, would have neutralised most of the advantages of an economic agreement with Luxembourg, Belgium refused to agree, in spite of the insistence of the French Government. In consequence of this refusal French influence was applied to secure a majority in favour of France at the plébiscite, which was held on September 28, 1919.

The electorate, which consisted of all men and women above twenty-one years of age, numbered 127,775, of whom 90,984 voted.[1] Two questions were to be decided. First, there was the dynastic question. Was Luxembourg to remain a Grand Duchy under the existing dynasty, or was the form of government to be a Republic? Secondly, was the economic union to be with France or with Belgium? The result of the voting was a large majority for maintaining the existing form of government, with the Grand Duchess Charlotte on the throne, and for entering an economic union with France.

There had never been much doubt what would be the decision on the dynastic question. There was a solid majority of Catholics in the Grand Duchy; and they supported the reigning family as the best guarantee for the protection of their religion and the continued independence of their country. On this question few of the Socialists voted; and many of them were understood, though Republicans in theory, to have grave doubts about the wisdom of voting for a Customs Union with France, one weighty reason being that the terms desired by the French had not been made public.

The feelings of those who supported the Belgian alliance may be gathered from the opinions expressed by M. Prum: "The result of last Sunday's plébiscite," he said, "cannot surprise anyone who has witnessed the agitation of which the Grand Duchy has been a prey latterly. France has carried on an electoral campaign—I may say—of the most intense character, and with most powerful weapons. Belgium remained blind in her unlimited confidence up to the last minute. Realising the injustice which in 1839 turned Luxembourg from her

[1] Temperley, *History of the Peace Conference*, ii. 186; *Annual Register*, 1919, p. 240.

natural orientation and placed her under German influence, Belgium refused to believe that France would dispute her influence in Luxembourg. French propaganda began with the military occupation. Making the most of the enthusiasm with which all good Luxembourgers greeted their liberators, the French, excluding the Belgians, used this sentiment of sympathy for their own ends." He went on to say that while Belgium was scientifically studying the economic union, France acted practically. French financiers had come to Luxembourg, and offered to purchase industrial works which formerly belonged to German firms; and the French Military Mission had bought 5,000 head of cattle, penetrating into remote villages for the purpose. Thus the metal industry and agriculture were won over. "More important still," he said, "were the clergy. The French occupying troops were Breton battalions, very pious, who counteracted the idea that France was atheist. The clergy were persuaded that the interest of the dynasty, to which they were devotedly attached, lay with France. Then France refused to make known her conditions until after the referendum; and the clerical press insisted, up to the last moment, that the character of the referendum was merely conditional. To-day, of course, all the French press calls it absolute. I have even known men, partisans of the Belgian union, vote for France in order to make her declare her hand." [1] M. Prum maintained that the result of the referendum did not solve the problem faced by Luxembourg; and, in answer to a question which he asked in the Chamber, the Minister of State said that the object of the referendum was to make the French Government speak out, and that the communication of the result to the French and Belgian Governments would contain a statement to that effect.

Soon after the plébiscite the Grand Duchess Charlotte, no doubt at the instance of her Ministers, gave an interview to a representative of the *Petit Parisien*, to whom she said: "I hope that Luxembourg may be attached to France by the closest economic bonds; for, believe me, no one loves your country more than I do. But when Luxembourg has declared by plébiscite her desire to be attached to France, when France has, on her side, accepted our offer, do you not think that it would be useful and benevolent to make room for a third friend, generous and faithful, who has some right to share our destiny? I am speaking of Belgium, of that Belgium whose glory has been bought with so much blood."

[1] *L'Indépendance Belge*, October 6, 1919.

The Belgians had merited this praise by their noble conduct; and the language of the Grand Duchess was very flattering to them. But the suggestion of an *entente à trois* did not find favour at Brussels; and the situation was so unsatisfactory that the Belgian Minister left Luxembourg, where only a consular agent remained in charge. Relations between Belgium and France, if not seriously strained, were far from cordial for some time. But after the Conference at Spa in July 1920, when the Belgian Government decided to send troops to Frankfurt, and assist in putting pressure on Germany to fulfil the stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles, an intimation was conveyed from Paris to the Cabinet of the Grand Duchy that France withdrew from negotiations for an economic union with Luxembourg, and that the Grand Ducal Ministers should come to an agreement with Belgium.[1]

The referendum in Luxembourg is an object lesson in the troubles which may beset a small State when it tries to put in practice the doctrine of self-determination. Nothing more was said about the result of the plébiscite; negotiations between Belgium and Luxembourg were reopened; and on July 25, 1921 an economic agreement was signed.

By this instrument, which came into force on May 1, 1922, and is meant to last for fifty years, Belgium entered a Customs Union with the Grand Duchy. The Customs frontier between the two countries disappeared, and the Customs and Excise régime of Belgium was applied to both.

It was agreed that agriculturists in the Grand Duchy were to receive an indemnity if the price of their home-grown corn fell below a certain figure in consequence of competition by Belgian farmers.

Belgium was to issue a loan of 175,000,000 francs to Luxembourg at 2 per cent. Belgium was to pay the difference between this rate of interest and the rate of issue, 4 per cent.

The currency of Luxembourg was to be replaced by Belgian currency. Notes for 10 francs or more current in the Grand Duchy were to be withdrawn immediately from circulation; but notes of less than 10 francs, to the total value of not more than 25,000,000, were to circulate temporarily within the Grand Duchy.

The railway system of Luxembourg was to be unified, under an arrangement to be made between the two countries; but if no arrangement was made within six months the Belgian

[1] The Military Convention between Belgium and France was signed in September 1920: *supra*, p. 146.

State Railways Administration was to manage the Guillaume-Luxembourg line provisionally.

Provision was made for a Commission to protect the interests of the Belgian and Luxembourg metal industries, and for arbitration to settle any difficulties which might arise between them. It was settled that a Council of five members, two from each country, with a Belgian chairman, should superintend the carrying out of the agreements.

In countries where Luxembourg had no diplomatic or consular agents Belgium undertook to represent the interests of the Grand Duchy.

It will, of course, be some time before the effect of the Customs Union on the trade of Luxembourg can be ascertained; and that must necessarily depend to some extent on the effect of the new Commercial Treaty between France and Belgium which was concluded on May 12, 1923, and in negotiating which two delegates from Luxembourg took part. Under the German Zollverein there was free exchange between Luxembourg and Alsace-Lorraine; and the erection of a Customs barrier since the restoration of these provinces to France has disturbed trade between them. The restoration must, by diverting traffic from Antwerp to French ports, be detrimental to Belgian trade; and the market in Alsace-Lorraine will, in view of the high Customs duties imposed by France, be unfavourable to both Luxembourg and Belgium, now economically one, unless they receive preferential terms. Before the war Luxembourg always imported large quantities of raw materials and machinery from Germany; and the heavy duties now levied by Belgium on German imports interfere with this branch of trade. There is, in fact, a great deal to be done before the full benefits of the economic union can be reaped. But it is confidently believed in Belgium and Luxembourg that it will confer substantial commercial advantages on both countries; and it is to be hoped that this expectation will be realised, particularly in the case of Luxembourg, where the financial position does not appear to be altogether satisfactory. The budget for the year 1923 shows an estimated deficit of 46,000,000 francs on a revenue of 158,000,000. This deficit is to be covered by an issue of Treasury Bonds; but additional taxation must be imposed if the finances of the country are to be put on a sound basis.

Hitherto Luxembourg's best customers have been Belgium, France, and Germany. Trade with the United Kingdom has been small, except in electric cables, of which Great Britain

has supplied by far the largest quantity. But there is a field for commercial enterprise in the Grand Duchy if British traders choose to enter it. Since the Customs Union came into force trade with Luxembourg is practically the same as trade with Belgium ; and a valuable suggestion made in a recent report published by the Department of Overseas Trade may be quoted : " An economical arrangement for British firms would be to work the country from headquarters in Belgium according to the trade concerned, e.g. the development of the steel industry might be well effected by agents at Liége, the centre of the Belgian steel industry, within easy reach of Luxembourg ; the agricultural machinery trade from Arlon, the capital of a highly agricultural Belgian district ; and so on." The Commercial Department of the British Embassy at Brussels has been informed that price lists and offers from British firms would be welcomed in Luxembourg, particularly for certain classes of foodstuffs, such as preserves of all kinds ; and British exporters are recommended not to content themselves with the bare despatch of trade literature, but to forward samples and actively solicit orders which, if obtained, would in all probability be remunerative.[1] It is to be remembered that this market will be lost, and with it important opportunities for increasing our commercial intercourse with Belgium, if British firms act on the assumption that it is not worth their while to do business with so small a country as Luxembourg, and leave the field to Germany. " There is," we are warned by the Department of Overseas Trade, " an increasing tendency on the part of important German firms to re-establish their connections in Luxembourg and to utilise the Grand Duchy as a centre for trade with the Entente countries, and competition from this quarter, in view of the old traditions of the Grand Duchy, may be expected to be very severe." [2]

The future of the Grand Duchy as an independent State must always be uncertain. " Nous voulons rester ce que nous sommes," is what the Luxembourgers often say ; and there will probably be no change so long as Western Europe remains at peace. But this country, wedged in between Belgium, the Rhineland, and Lorraine, close to where the question of the Saar Basin may, when the period of French exploitation has

[1] *Report on Economic and Commercial Conditions in the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg*, 1921, by Mr. B. Sullivan, Commercial Secretary to H.M. Embassy, Brussels, pp. 9, 10.

[2] Mr. Duke's *Report on Belgium*, 1922, p. 38. See also Mr. Bagge's *Report on Belgium*, 1923 (Annex on Luxembourg), pp. 76–9.

expired, let loose the dogs of war, can never really be safe. Meanwhile of the marriage between the Grand Duchess Charlotte and Prince Félix of Bourbon-Parma a son and daughter have been born, and the succession to the throne in the direct line is thus secured.

CHAPTER XV

THE OUTWORKS

"The Question of the Rhine. This is an ancient bone of contention. It has to do with the very constitution of Europe. In the germ at the death of Charlemagne, it has its point of departure in modern history, when the question of another succession was opened, whose rights are not yet determined, the heritage of Burgundy" (*Hanotaux*).

"Those Belgian fortresses, in the fate of which shallow politicians imagined we had no interest, were in truth the outworks of London" (*Macaulay*).

THE Kingdom of Belgium has never stood so high in the estimation of the world as during and since the war. Even those partisans of the Central Empires who have somehow persuaded themselves that other Powers were equally to blame for the catastrophe admit that Belgium was wholly blameless. The indignation excited by the lawless invasion, by the cruelty of the invaders, and by the wanton destruction of public and private property, has been followed by admiration for the fortitude with which the people endured their sufferings, and for the resolution displayed in the arduous work of restoration. No longer in that subordinate position which the obligation of perpetual neutrality implied, the Belgian people have taken their place among the fully independent States of Europe, and negotiate on equal terms with the greater Powers. At Cannes they showed that the military alliance with their mighty neighbour France had not made them her vassals. At Genoa their firm refusal to admit that the Bolsheviks had any right to confiscate private property in Russia showed that, whatever other Powers might do, they were determined to defend the principles of international law and the usages of civilised society.

The action of the Belgians at the Conference of Genoa raised their prestige to a higher point than ever. But prestige alone is not enough to give security; and the whole Belgian people must be haunted for many years by that sense of insecurity which haunted the two Leopolds throughout their reigns. After the fall of Napoleon III M. Favre said that Prussia had been at war with a dynasty and not with a people, and that

the French people, not having been responsible, ought to escape the penalties of defeat. The people, however, were forced to surrender two provinces, to pay a heavy indemnity, and to see their country occupied by the enemy till his claims were satisfied. The war of 1914–18, though planned and begun by the Hohenzollern dynasty and its Ministers, was emphatically a war of peoples, for the German people, though they had no voice in declaring it, entered into it with enthusiasm, and made themselves wholly and absolutely responsible for all that followed. The proudest boast of Germany had always been that the German army was the German people; and when defeat came, bringing with it the downfall of the Hohenzollerns, it was easy to see that disappointment, privations caused by the war, with fear of retribution at the hands of an avenging army from the West, and not any change of heart and mind, had caused the revolution and the establishment of a Republic.

But a great military nation, though in the hour of defeat it may, under compulsion, sign a Treaty of Peace which it bitterly resents, will always look forward to a time when the Treaty can be repudiated, and its terms got rid of by another war; and the Belgians, taught by the history of their provinces during many centuries, are far too wise not to foresee that, under whatever form of government the people of the former German Empire may choose to live in the future, there will always be danger of another war, if a time comes when the humiliation of 1918 can be reversed. They know how foolish was the talk about repentance. Nations do not go to Canossa; and in highly educated Germany, where the Universities are training grounds from which Professors send out the youth of the country reared up in maxims which make for war, with their minds full of ideas of German strength and superiority to other nations, with thoughts of conquest, hatred of France and England, and with all that is meant by the word Chauvinism, there will never be, at least among the majority, even so much as some slight passing regret for the sorrows caused to other countries by the events of 1914–18.

It is all but useless to hope that the peaceable elements in German life, found sometimes in families of high lineage, sometimes in quiet households of the middle rank, and sometimes among the working classes, will be able to prevail for many years to come against the influence of the Prussian ex-military party and the bureaucrats who are so numerous and powerful. To deny the harm done by Prussia in Central

Europe is to falsify history. If the old German States, which so many of us knew, and some of us even loved, could return to what they were in the years before 1870, it is possible, so frightful was the last war, that a long period, perhaps forty or fifty years, of peace might follow it; but, things being as they are, till the baleful spirit which has poisoned the very soul of the German people for so long has been exorcised, if it ever is, Belgium and France will be on their guard.

The frankly, often painfully, outspoken language of the journalists whose articles, in these times of steamboats and telegrams, reach our shores from other countries every day should make it easy for us to "see ourselves as others see us." But it would be a still more precious gift to have the power of seeing others as they see themselves. Such a gift, the capacity for seeing the situation in which other nations stand as they see it, is so rare, and yet so necessary if the foreign policy of a country is to be wisely conducted, that the possession of it seems to be the touchstone of sagacity in the management of international affairs.

It is difficult, however, for the British people, living in an island, with no frontier but the ocean, to see clearly the state of things on the Continent of Europe as the Continental nations see it, and to understand the feelings of the Belgians and the French, whose frontiers touch other countries, particularly the one by whom they have been attacked, and which, though defeated in the meantime, must always be dreaded as a possible invader in the future. This is probably the reason why the question of the reparations, so important to their trade, has occupied, almost entirely, the attention of the British people, though the question of security is equally important to France and Belgium, and, as we may some day find to our cost, to Great Britain also.

It is still more difficult for the people of the United States, safe beyond the Atlantic, and taking only a commercial interest in the state of Europe, to appreciate the political situation, and to sympathise with the intense longing for security which consumes the French and Belgian nations. When the war began the policy of President Wilson was watched with painful anxiety in Belgium; and it was a profound disappointment to those who had believed that, at such a crisis in world affairs, the United States would stand forth in defence of those principles of international law and justice which the German Government had violated. The United States had signed the Convention respecting the rights of neutrals at The Hague

Conference of 1907. It was thought that President Wilson could not treat it as a piece of waste paper, but must at least protest against the shameless breach of it with which the war began; and his silent acquiescence in the sufferings to which Belgium was subjected caused surprise. The plain Belgian citizen, who knew that his country was fighting for liberty, the sanctity of Treaties, free institutions, and the preservation of Europe, if not of all the world, from domination by one Power, could not understand that strange saying that the causes and objects of the war were no concern of the United States, nor the injunction laid on the Americans to be neutral even in their thoughts. It seemed to him that there were things for which surely no great nation could be too proud to fight. But, on the other hand, when the Belgians saw that in the United States there were men, both in public and in private stations, who refused to be neutral in either thought or word, and with what profuse generosity they rushed under the guidance of Mr. Hoover to the relief of Belgium, they felt sure that in the great Republic of the West there were thousands who regretted the frigid neutrality of the President. In Brussels nobody had any doubt about the private thoughts of Mr. Whitlock, the American Minister, or Mr. Gibson, the Secretary of Legation.

It was tidings of great joy to Belgium when the Government of the United States, after adhering to the cherished policy of non-intervention for a long time, thus escaping the agony of Europe, though receiving injuries and insults such as no great Power had ever borne so patiently, at last found that isolation was no longer possible, severed diplomatic relations with the German Empire in February 1917, and declared war two months later. The Central Empires and their Allies were exhausted, and their ultimate defeat was certain, even before the American troops were sufficiently trained to begin their independent operations. But the moral, as well as the physical, effect of their presence in Europe was great; and President Wilson and the British Prime Minister became the central figures in that strange diplomatic drama, the strangest in our modern history, which was performed at Paris in the year 1919.

All the world knew that President Wilson had come to Europe full of the noblest ambitions. But, in dealing with that problem of a lasting peace which he hoped to solve, he acted as if he had forgotten that he came from a new world to an old world, that he represented a young nation, with a short history behind it, and that the men he was to meet in

council represented ancient races with a long and stormy past. He seemed to forget that in the Belgian provinces there had been a famous civilisation centuries before the American Continent was discovered, that not only Commerce but Art and Learning flourished there when the territories which are now the United States of America were deserts peopled by savage tribes, and that, like the rest of Europe, they had been the scene of endless wars. He treated this battle-worn Continent, with all its memories of so many centuries of racial animosities, dynastic jealousies, rivalries of every sort, as if it had been a *tabula rasa* on which the fourteen commandments of his new law of peace could easily be engraved.

After the noise of battle had died away all Belgium was listening for the voice of President Wilson, who might have been a new Messiah coming to save the world—from the way in which some people spoke of him ; and when Mr. Lloyd George went to Paris, having just gained an overwhelming victory at the first general election after the war, great things were expected from him as the chief representative of Great Britain, at that time most popular in Belgium. The same fate befell both statesmen at the hands of their own countrymen. The President was not, indeed, himself a candidate at the next Presidential election ; but he had under-estimated the attachment of the United States to the principles which had hitherto guided their foreign policy. His plan for a universal society of nations to prevent war was confronted by the solid barriers of the Monroe Doctrine ; and the party which he had led was driven from power.

The downfall of the British Minister did not come so soon, and was brought about by a variety of causes, the most powerful of which was the general dissatisfaction of the country with his failures in foreign policy, which he had to a great extent taken into his own hands. These failures had, however, been inevitable from the first. Wanting in what has been called "le bon sens européen," [1] he could not possibly succeed. Here was a party leader, long prominent in domestic politics, and latterly one of the outstanding figures of the war, ambitious and eloquent, but without the education needed for the new task he was undertaking. Everything was done that could be done to help him. Instruction on various subjects was given by very capable experts, and the pupil was apt ;

[1] "Cette faculté précieuse qui permet aux hommes d'Etat de se rendre un compte exact des intérêts des autres pays et des nécessités qui en découlent pour leurs gouvernements" (Rothan, *L'Affaire du Luxembourg*, p. 96).

but no amount of natural quickness in picking up information, or dexterity in using it, could compensate for the want of early training and a genuine acquaintance with international affairs, when he was suddenly brought face to face with problems which required for their solution qualities of knowledge and experience which he did not possess, problems immeasurably more difficult than any which were discussed at Langres, Châtillon, Chaumont, Paris, or Vienna at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

Among these problems the formidable problem of the Rhine presented itself. This was a purely European question, which did not really concern the United States ; but French, Belgian, and British interests were deeply involved. It was a mere commonplace of European history that France had always maintained that the Rhine was her natural frontier ; and in 1919 her demand was that the territory on the west bank, from the frontier of Holland in the neighbourhood of Cleves to the point at which the river becomes the boundary between Baden and Alsace-Lorraine, should be placed permanently under French control, or erected into an independent State.

This familiar question of the Rhenish provinces was now raised in a new shape, a material fact which is not sufficiently, if at all, noticed by critics of the French proposal. Hitherto whenever France tried to obtain the Rhine frontier, or succeeded in obtaining it, as she did during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, possession of the Netherlands, or at least of the Belgian provinces, had always formed part of her general plan. This had invariably brought her into conflict with other Powers, especially with England. From the days of Marlborough, to go no further back, to the days of Chatham and his son, every statesman saw that the preservation of a just equilibrium, or balance of power, by which alone peace could be assured, depended on the exclusion from the Low Countries of any Power whose ambition was to crush all rivals and dominate over Europe. When the British Cabinet, to recall one well-known instance of our "traditional policy," were preparing for the negotiations which Lord Malmesbury conducted at Paris in 1796, the restoration of the Belgian provinces to Austria was stated to be "the first object in any plan for pacification with France" [1] ; and when the negotiations began in the following year France was at once called on to evacuate Belgium and relinquish the left bank of the Rhine. France

[1] Lord Grenville to Sir Morton Eden (Minister at Vienna), December 22, 1795. F.O., Holland, 58.

refused. If, the French plenipotentiary Delacroix said, the Belgian provinces belonged to France, the cause of all the wars of the last two centuries would be removed; and if the left bank of the Rhine was recognised as the natural boundary of France the peace of Europe would be secured for two centuries to come. Then, as before and after down to the reign of Napoleon III, every move to obtain the Rhine frontier was understood to involve the annexation of Belgium. But the French proposal of 1919 was quite different. There was, it need hardly be said, no question of incorporating Belgium. Every student of recent history knows how earnestly M. Clémenceau and Marshal Foch pleaded with the American President and the British Prime Minister, how the French proposal was rejected, and how the two Treaties of Guarantee were signed, promising that Great Britain and the United States would come to the help of France against an unprovoked attack by Germany.

The Treaty of Guarantee negotiated by President Wilson for the defence of France, which implied the defence of Belgium also, was clearly inconsistent with the policy propounded by Washington, Adams, Monroe and other leaders of American opinion, and ever since held in reverence by the United States. It therefore shared the fate of the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations, the former at all events of which, almost inseparably bound together with the latter, constituted what is now seen to be a fantastic and unworkable instrument, compared to which the much-abused Final Act of the Congress of Vienna was a masterpiece of political wisdom.

When the corresponding Treaty between Great Britain and France came before the House of Commons, in order that it might be embodied in a statute, the Prime Minister said: "I am afraid it will create a very bad impression in France if the Treaty of Versailles is carried through and this Treaty is postponed and put off. These things are very difficult to explain abroad, and there will be a feeling that the British Parliament is hesitating. I do not believe that a man would hesitate to go to the aid of France if she were attacked." He pressed for haste; and the "Defence of France Act," read a first time on July 3, 1919, passed through all its stages without being opposed, and received the Royal Assent on July 31. But this undertaking to defend our firm ally in the war was treated as if it had never been given, for the reason which has already been explained.[1]

[1] *Supra*, p. 145.

The United States acted consistently, and with good cause, when they declined to ratify either the Treaty of Versailles or the Treaty of Guarantee; but the British Government, while accepting the incalculable responsibilities imposed by the grandiose Treaty of Versailles and Covenant of the League, shrank from implementing the humbler promise to go to the help of France if she were attacked. This may not have been literally a breach of faith; but it produced the bad impression of which the Prime Minister had spoken in the House of Commons. France felt that she had been deceived, cajoled into giving up her plan for guarding the Rhine frontier; Great Britain lost all moral right to interfere if she thought any action taken by France or Belgium on the Rhine unwise; and it may be with some reason affirmed that the occupation of the Ruhr, if it was undertaken as a means for obtaining greater security by weakening Germany, as well as in the hope of exacting reparations, followed on the non-fulfilment of the Treaty of Guarantee.

The defence of Belgium, though not mentioned, had been implied in the Treaties by which Great Britain and the United States undertook to assist France against aggression by Germany; and after the refusal of the United States to ratify the Treaty signed by President Wilson, and the lapse of the Anglo-French Treaty which followed, Belgium was left with no definite guarantee. The Cabinet of Brussels therefore approached the Governments of Great Britain and France upon the subject. Finding that the British Government were not prepared to act, they opened the negotiations with France which led to the Military Convention of September 1920.

This Convention obviously improved the situation of Belgium; but the Ministers were anxious to have a similar agreement with Great Britain, and when in 1922 the British Ministers visited Cannes in the course of their diplomatic tours through Europe, and offered to conclude, on certain conditions, a Defensive Treaty for ten years with France, the question of an Anglo-Belgian "Pact" was discussed. Matters went so far that when M. Theunis and M. Jaspar returned to Brussels they brought with them the draft of a Convention by which Great Britain undertook to assist Belgium, with all her forces, in case of an attack by Germany. In February 1922 negotiations to settle the exact terms of this Convention, which was warmly applauded by all the Belgian parties, and would, had it been finally concluded, have completed the existing agreement with France, began at Brussels between M. Jaspar and Sir George

Grahame, the British Ambassador. But after the resignation of M. Briand it was found that no agreement could be reached. Nothing came of the negotiations at Brussels; Germany, emboldened by the growing discord in the ranks of the Entente Powers, continued to evade the payment of reparations; and the Ruhr was occupied in January 1923.

Whether France and Belgium were wise or unwise in the step they took, whether the latest plan for obtaining the reparations due by Germany succeeds or fails, there can be no doubt that the peace of Europe depends on co-operation between these two Powers and Great Britain on the question of the Rhine. In giving an account of how the triple alliance of the United States, Great Britain, and France to resist German aggression originated, Mr. Lansing says: "The proposal was doubtless made to remove two provisions on which the French are most insistent: *First*, an international military staff to be prepared to use force against Germany if there were signs of military activity; *second*, the creation of an independent Rhenish Republic to act as a "buffer" State. Of course the Triple Alliance would make this measure needless."[1] Mr. Lansing told President Wilson that he considered the Treaty a mistake, because it seemed to discredit the security offered by the League, and also because it would be the cause of serious opposition in the United States, where he felt sure it would be rejected. But the President replied that he "considered it necessary to adopt this policy in the circumstances, and that, at any rate, having passed his word with M. Clémenceau, who was accepting the Treaty because of his promise, it was too late to reconsider the matter, and useless to discuss it." He had tried to persuade M. Clémenceau and Marshal Foch that, in the new epoch of the world's history he was inaugurating, strategic frontiers and territorial guarantees would not be required, because the League of Nations would be a sure defence againt invasion. But the French were not satisfied. They desired to have something more, and were offered the guarantee of the United States and Great Britain, which they accepted as a substitute for the régime they had proposed to establish on the Rhine.

The whole policy of the President went amiss. He wove the Covenant into the texture of the Treaty so closely that they could not be separated; but the only effect of this device was that instead of bringing the United States into the League of Nations, it prevented the ratification of the Treaty. In order to bring France into the League of Nations, and in order to

[1] *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative*, p. 159.

persuade her to abandon her plans upon the Rhine, he promised a defensive alliance with the United States. But in America it was rightly thought preposterous that dwellers on the banks of the Mississippi should be asked to give a pledge that they would cross the Atlantic to risk their lives and waste their treasure whenever war, begun by Germany, broke out on the banks of a European river.

To the security, however, of Great Britain, France, and Belgium a definite settlement of the question of the Rhine frontier is essential. The military occupation of the left bank enabled Germany to enter Belgium and Luxembourg suddenly, sweep into France, take possession of the Flemish coast, establish naval bases there, and very nearly reach the French ports opposite England. Though by the Treaty of Versailles Germany is forbidden ever to maintain fortifications or armed forces on the left bank, and for some distance to the east of the right bank, we should greatly err if we imagined that this is enough to protect Belgium or France against another attack, especially after the fifteen years' period of occupation by the Allies has expired; for, even supposing that Germany abides by the stipulations of Versailles, and does not at any time maintain armed forces in the Rhenish provinces, she might secretly organise measures for transporting them over the Rhine and across the territory between the left bank and the frontiers of Belgium or France.

Besides forbidding the presence of military forces on the Rhine the Treaty of Versailles attempted to disarm Germany. All materials of war were to be delivered up in March 1920. Next month the army was to be reduced to 200,000 men, and in June of the same year to 100,000. Factories which could be used for the production of explosives, guns, and shells were to be controlled by the Allies. In short, with these and other precautions, the Treaty, if carried out, was enough to ensure the total disarmament of Germany. But ever since 1919 there have been clear indications, if not conclusive evidence, of preparations for another war. With every allowance for exaggeration or mere rumour, it is certain that arms have been concealed in large quantities. Under the Treaty Germany was to have 288 cannon. But after twelve months had passed it was found that a very large number had been retained; and the discovery of the 343 large howitzers which were found walled up in a building near Dresden was significant. Nothing, again, could be more suspicious than what happened when the returns showing the strength of the army at the date of the

Armistice were called for. The German authorities said they had been lost; but they were afterwards found hidden at Spandau. It was arranged that they should be placed in charge of a guard till the officers of the Control Commission had time to examine them; but they were secretly removed during the night. There is said to be a scarcity of machine-guns. But firms, such as Krupp's, have factories in Russia, where a number of German officers are reported to be living. They can feel no sympathy with the Bolsheviks, but have apparently no scruples about enlisting them as useful allies. "Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo." The army, nominally disbanded, still exists to a great extent under the disguises of the Reichswehr, Einwohnerwehr, and Sicherheits-polizei. The police are practically trained soldiers, recruited from the age of seventeen, and serving under army rules. No Prussian can forget the famous system by which Scharnhorst, between 1806 and 1813, evaded the restrictions placed by Napoleon on the numbers of the Prussian army; and it would be strange indeed if in Berlin there were not men able to organise a similar system, and thus make ready for the new "War of Liberation" about which so much is said at the meetings of the Pan-German League, where ominous declarations that the German army must once more be the German nation are already heard.

Only those who said in January 1914, when at Berlin the last touches were being given to the plan of campaign, that for twenty years there had been no more favourable moment for reducing the British armaments, who did not believe six months later, when the German army was mustering for the march upon Liége, that the neutrality of Belgium would be violated, and who, in face of all that is happening beyond the Rhine, have declared that Germany is no longer to be reckoned with as a military Power, can fail to see that the Treaty of Versailles does not give permanent security to the Belgian Kingdom.

One of the great lessons taught by the war, as well as by the course of British history for centuries, is that the British people have a vital interest in the security of Belgium. And side by side with Belgium stands France. Our relations with these two countries have been made difficult by the fact of not adhering to the Treaty of Guarantee signed in 1919. The interest of the United States in the question of the Rhine and the defence of Belgium and France is so remote that they could not reasonably be expected to ratify the Treaty. But the policy of the British Coalition Government caused disap-

pointment and surprise in Belgium; and the influence of the French press, their chief source of political information, has increased that estrangement of the Belgian people from Great Britain which, it is useless to deny, has been growing ever since the end of the war. The Cabinet of Brussels have been most anxious to maintain friendly relations with Great Britain, and have seen with dismay the frequent misunderstandings between London and Paris. There can be no security for Belgium without harmony between Great Britain and France; nor, indeed, can there be security for Great Britain.

Lord Macaulay, in dealing with the policy of England in the year 1693, when the purpose of the Grand Alliance formed by William III was to save Belgium, then known as the Spanish Netherlands, and the United Provinces from annexation by Louis XIV, shows that there was a difference of opinion between the two great English parties as to the way in which the war ought to be carried on. The opinion of the Tory party was that the policy of England ought to be strictly insular, that the defence of Flanders and the Rhine should be left to the Dutch Republic, Austria, and the Princes of the German Empire, that England should confine herself to the maritime war, and that she ought to maintain an army only for defence against invasion. Mons, Namur, and Charleroi had been taken by the French; and the opinion of the Whigs was that if the English troops were withdrawn, Ostend, Ghent, Brussels, and Liége would fall. Then the Coalition against France would collapse, and be forced to accept whatever terms Louis XIV might dictate. "In a few months," so the Whigs contended, "he would be at liberty to put forth his full strength against our island. Then would come a struggle for life or death. It might well be hoped that we should be able to defend our soil even against such a general and such an army as had won the battle of Landen. But the fight must be long and hard. How many fertile countries would be turned into deserts, how many flourishing towns would be laid in ashes, before the invaders were destroyed or driven out? One triumphant campaign in Kent and Middlesex would do more to impoverish the nation than ten disastrous campaigns in Brabant. Those Belgian fortresses, in which shallow politicians imagined that we had no interest, were in truth the outworks of London." [1]

The Belgian provinces were in as great danger of annexation

[1] *History of England*, chapter xx. "It is remarkable," Lord Macaulay adds, "that this dispute between the two great factions was, during seventy years, regularly revived as often as our country was at war with France. That Eng-

by Germany during the war which began in 1914 as they were of annexation by France during the war of the Grand Alliance; and the security of the British Islands would have been as precarious if the dominions of the German Empire had been extended from the Rhine to the coast of Flanders as it would have been had Louis XIV succeeded in annexing the Spanish Netherlands. In the future it will be just as essential to our safety that Belgium should remain intact and independent as it was between 1914 and 1918. And the security of Belgium is bound up with the security of France. It therefore follows that common prudence calls for an understanding between Great Britain, Belgium, and France, and an agreement for mutual defence. M. Briand said that when he attended the Conference at Cannes he thought that the Rhine might be used as the common frontier of the Allies against German aggression; but the means by which the policy of mutual defence can best be made effective is a question of strategy which must be left to military experts, who will, however, no doubt bear in mind how near to the countries whose life and death may depend on their decisions war in the air has brought the Rhine.

There has recently been a tendency to treat this question of the Rhine as if it were something which has arisen since, or because of, the war of 1914–18. But surely it ought to be treated as, what everyone knows it is, one of the oldest of European questions. Even if we do not recall the projects of the Burgundian Dukes, or of Louis XI, we should think of how Mazarin said nearly three hundred years ago, during the negotiations before the Peace of Westphalia, that possession of the left bank of the Rhine would give Paris "un boulevard inexpugnable," how the doctrine of the natural frontier was afterwards the keynote of French policy during the reign of Louis XIV, how it was adopted by the Republicans, whose army was welcomed by the Rhinelanders, and how it was carried into full effect by Napoleon I. Before 1815 Prussia owned nothing on the left bank except part of Gelderland, Mörs, and Cleves, all of which were on the lower reaches of the river. But unhappily, during the disputes at Vienna over the disposal of Saxony, the possessions of Prussia on the Rhine were enlarged till they included, against the wishes of the inhabitants, almost the whole of the Rhenish provinces. The

land ought never to attempt great military operations on the Continent continued to be a fundamental article of the creed of the Tories till the French Revolution produced a complete change in their feelings."

plan of Wellington and Castlereagh was to place a buffer State between the Germans and the French by extending the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Rhine ; but they had to abandon this plan in order to satisfy the territorial appetite of the Prussians, who, disappointed at not obtaining the whole of Saxony, were clamouring for annexation elsewhere, and a frontier on the Meuse. Castlereagh foresaw what would happen. " The Prussians at Aix-la-Chapelle ! " he said. " In a hundred years they will be at Antwerp ! " And so they were. That was an evil day for the French, the Belgians, and the Germans themselves when, for the first time in history, the frontiers of France and Prussia touched each other. It made aggression easy and tempting from one side or the other ; and now Belgium and France, after suffering beyond all example at the hands of Prussianised Germany, naturally seek to find security against aggression in the future. What the policy of Great Britain ought to be seems plain. For both political and economic reasons it is a British interest to have the friendship of our two nearest neighbours ; and nothing, in the opinion of the writer, would go further to secure that friendship than the *beau geste* of a frank offer to renew the Treaty signed in 1919, but in the form of a mutual guarantee against aggression, recognising that, as against the probable enemy, Great Britain, France, and Belgium have to defend the same frontier, and providing for definite and detailed plans, to be worked out by the naval and military staffs of the three countries, for immediate co-operation, in the event of war, on land and sea, and in the air. The knowledge that such a Treaty existed would do more than anything else to preserve the peace of Western Europe.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

A.D.

843. Treaty of Verdun. Empire of Charlemagne divided between his three grandsons. Charles the Bald obtains France west of the Schelde, Louis Germany east of the Rhine, and Lothair, with the title of Emperor, the intervening territory between France and Germany, from the North Sea to the Mediterranean.

863. Charles the Bald conveys Flanders as an hereditary fief to his son-in-law, Baldwin Bras-de-Fer. Artois is afterwards joined to Flanders.

900–1300. Rise of Ypres, Bruges, Ghent, and other towns. The Communes. Alliance between the Count of Flanders, the Duke of Brabant, the Emperor (Adolf of Habsburg), the Count of Holland, and Edward I of England against Philip the Fair of France. Collapse of this League, and peace between England and France (1299).

1302. The Flemings defeat the French at the Battle of the Golden Spurs.

1338–45. Jacques van Artevelde. Edward III claims the throne of France and concludes an alliance with Flanders. Battle of Sluis (June 1340). Van Artevelde murdered at Ghent (July 1345).

1369. Philip the Hardy, Duke of Burgundy, marries Margaret, daughter of Louis de Maele, Count of Flanders.

1384. Death of Louis de Maele. Male line of Flemish Counts extinct. Philip the Hardy becomes Count of Flanders.

1404. Death of Philip the Hardy. He is succeeded by his son, Jean sans Peur, who is murdered in 1419. Philip the Good, his son, becomes Duke of Burgundy.

1419–67. Philip the Good acquires supremacy in the Low Countries, and tries to set up a centralised government. He is succeeded by his son, Charles the Bold.

1467–77. Sovereignty of Charles the Bold, who marries Margaret of York. He is killed at Nancy (January 5, 1477), and is succeeded by his daughter Mary, who marries the Archduke Maximilian of Austria.

1482–1506. Death of Mary of Burgundy (1482). Civil war in the Low Countries during the minority of her son, Philip le Beau. Maximilian is elected Emperor. Philip assumes the administration of the Low Countries. He marries

A.D.

Juana, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, and dies in 1506, leaving a son, Charles, afterwards German Emperor and King of Spain.

1506–55. Reign of Charles V.

1555–79. Charles abdicates at Brussels (1555). Accession of Philip II of Spain, and Revolt of the Netherlands.

1579. League of Arras, Union of Utrecht and secession of Holland, Zeeland, and other northern provinces.

1598. Death of Philip II. Philip III entrusts the administration of the Netherlands to the Infanta Isabella and her husband, the Archduke Albert.

1609–33. Twelve years' truce. War renewed on the death of the Archduke Albert (1621). Death of Isabella in 1633. The Spanish Netherlands are governed from Madrid.

1648. Peace of Westphalia (Treaty of Münster). Independence of the Dutch Republic recognised. Closure of the Schelde.

1659. Treaty of the Pyrenees. Cession by Spain to France of Artois, Courtrai, and several parts of Hainaut, Namur, and Luxembourg.

1668. Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. France acquires Ypres, Furnes, Lille, and other Flemish towns.

1678. Treaty of Nymeguen. Spain recovers Courtrai, Charleroi, and other places ; but France obtains the south of Flanders.

1689. William III of England forms the Grand Alliance against Louis XIV. War in Flanders, 1692 ; the French take Namur, which is retaken by William III in 1694.

1697. Treaty of Ryswick. France retains Artois, which is now finally separated from Flanders, but cedes to Spain Courtrai, Charleroi, Mons, Ypres, Nieuport, and Luxembourg.

1700–15. War of the Spanish Succession. Treaty of Utrecht (1713). The Spanish Netherlands are transferred to the House of Austria. Treaty of Rastatt (1714) confirms the provisions of Utrecht. Barrier Treaty (1715) places Dutch garrisons in Namur, Tournai, Menin, Ypres, Warneton, Furnes, Knocke-sur-Yser, and Termonde.

1740. Death of the Emperor Charles VI and accession of his daughter, the Empress Maria Theresa (Queen of Hungary).

1740–48. War of the Austrian Succession. France (Louis XV) takes Brussels, Mons, Namur, and Antwerp, and conquers the whole of the Austrian Netherlands.

1748. Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. Austria recovers the Southern Netherlands.

1780. Death of the Empress Maria Theresa, who is succeeded by her son, Joseph II.

1781–85. The Barrier Towns are evacuated by the Dutch. Emperor

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Joseph II attempts to reopen the Schelde. Treaty of Fontainebleau; the Barrier Treaty abrogated.

1792–95. French invasion and conquest of the Low Countries. The Austrian Netherlands are annexed by France.

1797. Treaty of Campo-Formio. Austrian Netherlands are ceded to France.

1797–1814. The French period. Holland annexed by Napoleon. After the battle of Leipzig (October 1813), the Dutch rise, expel the French officials, and recall the Stadtholder, William of Orange-Nassau. The Allies decide that the Northern and Southern Netherlands must be reunited.

1815. Final Act of the Congress of Vienna. Southern Netherlands (present Kingdom of Belgium) taken from France, and united with the Dutch Republic to form the "Kingdom of the Netherlands," under the House of Orange-Nassau. Luxembourg, erected into a Grand Duchy, is given to William I of the Netherlands personally, as compensation for family estates in Germany ceded to Prussia. France loses the Rhine frontier. Prussia acquires the Rhenish provinces, together with parts of Gelderland, Limburg, and Luxembourg hitherto included in the Southern Netherlands.

1830. Revolt of the Belgian provinces. Declaration of Independence. National Congress at Brussels. William I appeals to the five Powers. Conference of London. Protocol signed (December 20) declaring that the Belgian provinces are to be independent.

1831. Conference of London frames (January 20) Articles fixing the frontiers of Belgium and Holland, and imposing perpetual neutrality on Belgium under the guarantee of the five Powers. William I accepts the Articles; Belgian Congress rejects them. Congress draws up a Constitution for Belgium. Throne offered to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, who accepts on condition that the Congress accepts the "XVIII Articles." He is proclaimed "King of the Belgians" on July 21. The Dutch invade Belgium, but retire on the arrival of a French army. Treaty of the XXIV Articles. Partitions of Luxembourg and Limburg. Belgium accepts the Treaty; William I refuses it.

1832. British and French blockade of Dutch ports. French besiege citadel of Antwerp. Dutch surrender it, but continue to hold two forts on the Schelde; and the Belgians continue to occupy the whole of Luxembourg and Limburg.

1833. Convention of London (May 21): the *status quo* in Luxembourg and Limburg to be maintained till a Definitive Treaty is signed.

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1835. Belgians open the first railway on the Continent (from Brussels to Malines).

1838. William I accepts (March 14) the XXIV Articles. Belgian resistance to partition of Luxembourg and Limburg.

1839. Definitive Treaties signed on April 19. The independent and neutral Kingdom of Belgium is finally established.

1846. Coalition of Catholic and Liberal parties (since 1829) dissolved.

1848. Franchise lowered by Liberal Government.

1863. Tolls on the Schelde, levied by the Dutch, are capitalised. Increase of trade at Antwerp.

1865. Death of Leopold I, and accession of his son, Leopold II.

1866. Napoleon III and the annexation of Belgium. The Benedetti incident.

1867. The Affair of Luxembourg. The Grand Duchy neutralised.

1870. Franco-Prussian War. Danger of a violation of Belgian neutrality by either France or Prussia. Leopold II appeals Queen Victoria and the British Government. Treaties concluded by Great Britain with France and Prussia for the defence of Belgium.

1872. Germany takes over the management of railways in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and promises never to use them for purposes of war.

1873. Law passed allowing use of Flemish in legal proceedings.

1878. Law that official publications are to be in both Flemish and French.

1884. Catholics obtain a majority and remain in office for the next thirty years.

1885. Belgian Labour Party formed. Conference of Berlin. Leopold II becomes Sovereign of the Independent Congo State.

1887. Danger of European war. Discussions in the Press on British obligation to defend Belgian neutrality.

1893. Universal Suffrage and the Plural Vote.

1897. Flemish an official language equally with French.

1899. Proportional Representation introduced.

1900–06. Development of German plans for invading Belgium in a war with France. Anglo-French agreement (*Entente Cordiale*), 1904. Consultations begin (1906) between the British and French Staffs as to co-operation in the event of war. Conversations of British Military Attaché at Brussels with the head of the Belgian Staff.

1908. The Independent Congo State becomes a Belgian Colony.

1909. Army Reform. Death of Leopold II and accession of his nephew, King Albert.

1913. Law of compulsory education passed. Secret sitting of the Belgian Chambers. German plans revealed. Universal military service adopted.

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1914. *May* 31.—German plan of campaign finally decided.

June 28.—Assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand at Sarajevo.

July 18.—Contents of Ultimatum to be presented by Austria to Serbia communicated from Berlin to Count Hertling (Bavarian Prime Minister).

July 23.—Ultimatum delivered to Serbia.

July 26. Ultimatum to Belgium, demanding unopposed passage for the German army, drawn up at the War Office in Berlin. It is sent to the German Minister at Brussels on the 29th.

July 28.—Austria declares war on Serbia.

July 29.—Russia decides to mobilise.

July 31.—Germany calls on Russia to stop all military measures within 12 hours, and on France to say, within 18 hours, whether she will remain neutral.

August 1.—Germany declares war on Russia. French mobilisation. Belgian mobilisation.

August 2.—Neutrality of Luxembourg violated by Germany. France entered by German troops at four points without a declaration of war. At 7 p.m. the ultimatum is presented to Belgium, and an answer demanded within 12 hours.

August 3.—Belgium refuses the German demand, and appeals to Great Britain, France, and Russia, as guaranteeing Powers, for intervention. Germany declares war on France.

August 4.—German troops enter Belgium. Mobilisation ordered in Great Britain. British Ultimatum to Germany calling for withdrawal from Belgium. German refusal, and British declaration of war.

August 7–19.—German advance. Liége occupied. The forts silenced. Retirement of Belgians.

August 23–5.—Fall of Namur. Massacre at Dinant.

September 12–28.—Belgian sortie from Antwerp. Battles on the line Aerschot-Malines. Bombardment of forts round Antwerp.

October 5–7.—British Naval Brigade at Antwerp. Germans cross the Schelde. Evacuation begins.

October 8–9.—Antwerp bombarded. General evacuation. Town occupied by Germans.

October 14.—Belgian army reaches the Yser.

October 16–*November* 2.—Battle of the Yser. Franco-Belgian forces hold the line Dixmude-Nieuport. Sluices of Yser canal opened. Germans retire and concentrate on Ypres.

December 9.—Count Lerchenfeld (Bavarian envoy at Berlin) writes to Count Hertling (Bavarian Prime Minister) that Germany must pretend to have been as much surprised as any other country by the Austrian action towards

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Serbia, and that knowledge of the contents of the Ultimatum before its delivery must be denied "come what may."

1915. *May* 12.—The Bryce Committee on the conduct of the German army in Belgium reports that "murder, lust, and pillage prevailed on a scale unparalleled in any war between civilised nations during the last three centuries."

December 17.—La Panne, where the King and Queen of the Belgians live, bombarded by six German aeroplanes.

1916. *April* 30.—In Africa Belgian column reaches Victoria Nyanza region.

May 3–6.—Belgians occupy positions on Lake Kivu.

June 2–6.—All Belgians up to the age of 40 who are living outside Belgium, or can escape, called to the colours. In Africa Belgians advance north-west of Lake Tanganyika.

September 19.—They occupy Tabora.

November 8–12.—Many Belgians deported by the Germans. Appeal of Cardinal Mercier to the civilised world.

July 5.—Belgian Socialists at Stockholm declare that they will not make peace with Imperial Germany.

December 1.—German East Africa cleared of the enemy by the Anglo-Belgian forces.

1918. *April* 22.—British Naval raid on Zeebrugge. Canal to Bruges blocked by sinking ships and Mole damaged.

May 10.—H.M.S. *Vindictive* sunk by her crew between the piers of Ostend harbour and entrance partly blocked.

July 18.—End of the great German advance in France, and beginning of the Allied counter-attack.

September 14.—German offer of peace to Belgium on condition of no indemnity and no reparations.

September 28.—Anglo-Belgian advance under King Albert.

October 14–21.—Belgians enter Ostend, Zeebrugge, Bruges, and Ghent. Whole Belgian coast now in hands of the Allies.

November 11.—Armistice.

November 18.—Belgian troops enter Antwerp and Brussels.

November 22.—King Albert's return to Brussels.

1919. Treaty of Versailles. Anglo-French and Franco-American Treaties for defence of France. "Defence of France Act" passed by British Parliament (July). Negotiations for revision of the Treaties of 1839 begun between Belgium and Holland. Abdication of the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg, who is succeeded by her sister, the Princess Charlotte. Plébiscite in Luxembourg. Majority in favour of an economic union with France.

1920. The negotiations between Belgium and Holland break down on the question of the Wielingen Channel. As the Treaty

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of Versailles and the Treaty of Guarantee to France are not ratified by the United States Congress, the Anglo-French Treaty of Guarantee lapses. Military Convention between Belgium and France. France abandons scheme for an economic union with Luxembourg, and negotiations are opened between Belgium and Luxembourg.

1921. Economic union between Belgium and Luxembourg.

1922. Reparations question becomes acute.

1923. Occupation of the Ruhr. Economic Agreement with France (May 11). Question of a Flemish University for Ghent settled after a Ministerial crisis (July 18). Army Law passed (July 20).

B—ECONOMICS

CHAPTER XVI

ECONOMIC RESOURCES, FINANCE, AND TRADE

With perfect truth an English diplomat at Warsaw once described Poland as a country "precluded from every exterior commerce by its neighbours, and deprived of every interior improvement by its Constitution." Exactly the reverse is true of Belgium. With a Constitution which gives full scope for political, economic, and social improvements, Belgium occupies a geographical position which throughout the ages has always made it a highway for the commerce not only of its neighbours, but also of far distant countries. Confidence in the future of Belgian trade is taught by the past. In the National Library at Paris, we learn from Mr. Wilfrid Robinson's *Bruges, an Historical Sketch*, there is a list of the places which sent their produce to Flanders in the Middle Ages. "England sent wool, lead, tin, coal, and cheese; Ireland and Scotland chiefly hides and wool; Denmark, pigs; Russia, Hungary, and Bohemia, large quantities of wax; Poland, gold and silver; Germany, wine; Liége, copper kettles; and Bulgaria, furs." After naming many parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa which sent goods the manuscript adds: "And all the aforesaid realms and regions send their merchants with wares to Flanders, besides those who come from France, Poitou, and Gascony, and from those islands of which we know not the names of their Kingdoms."

In those days, when the waterway of the Zwijn led to Bruges from the North Sea, that wealthy city was the centre of Flemish commerce. We read of 150 ships entering in one day, and of German merchants buying 2,000 pieces of cloth, made by Flemish weavers, in a morning's marketing. A citizen of Bruges was always at the head of the Hanseatic League, and maintained the rights of that famous commercial society with the title of "Comte de la Hanse." Merchant princes lived there in palaces. Money-changers grew rich. Edward III borrowed from the Bardi at Bruges on the security of the crown jewels of England. Contracts of insurance against maritime

risks were made from an early period; and the code which regulated traffic by sea was known as the "Rôles de Damme."[1] After the fall of Bruges, Ghent, and Ypres, Antwerp grew in commercial importance, flourished without a rival for many years, and then, ruined by war and the closing of the Schelde, sank down to the miserable condition in which Napoleon found it at the beginning of the nineteenth century. "It is little better," he said to the Communal Council in 1803, "than a heap of ruins. It is scarcely like a European city. I could almost have believed myself this morning in some African township. Everything needs to be made, harbours, quays, docks; and everything shall be made, for Antwerp must avail itself of the immense advantages of its central position between the North and the South, and of its magnificent and deep river."

Antwerp was indeed a pitiable sight at that time. Its trade had sunk to nothing. Rows of squalid houses, with wooden gables three hundred years old, overhung stagnant canals choked up with mud and weeds. The wharves on the banks of the Schelde were mere heaps of rotten timber. Grass was growing in the deserted streets; and the walls of this desolate place contained a population of only some 40,000. Such in the beginning of the nineteenth century was the state of Antwerp, which had once been the greatest sea-port in the world.

Throughout the nineteenth century, except for a few months in 1814, during the Hundred Days next year, and when a short period of war followed the separation from Holland, there was profound peace in Belgium, and nothing happened to impede the exercise by all classes of the people of those marvellous habits of hard work which by 1914 had raised their small country to the fifth place among the commercial nations of the world. Then came the felon stroke which threatened to destroy the fruit of all those years of industry.

The first problem which the Belgian Government had to solve after the war was the problem of how the economic resources of the country could be utilised for the recovery of those conditions of stability in finance, industrial undertakings, and trade which had made the Kingdom of Belgium so prosperous and the people so happy before the invasion of 1914.

[1] Damme, on the Zwijn Channel, a short distance from Bruges, was a busy port in the Middle Ages, with a population of some 50,000. But in the second half of the fifteenth century, when the sea-trade of Bruges came to an end, Damme became a place of no importance. It is now a village, with about 1,000 inhabitants, on the canal to Sluis in Holland, which was constructed by Napoleon in 1810 on the line of the Zwijn.

It was obviously essential that, if the work of reconstruction was to succeed, the communications by land and water between different parts of the country, which had contributed so largely to the industrial progress of the nation, must be put in working order as soon as possible. The early and remarkable development of the internal State railways and light district railways has already been mentioned; and every traveller to Belgium must have acquired some general knowledge of the through lines from Ostend to Holland, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, and even as far as Constantinople, which made Belgium one of the great starting-points for the international trade of Europe. The internal and external communications possessed by the Belgians were so necessary to their commerce that they may be fairly reckoned among the most important of those national assets on which the war made such appalling inroads.

Before their retreat to the Rhine the Imperial armies had systematically destroyed almost the whole of the railway system in Belgium; but the work of reconstruction was commenced at once. By working all day and all night the Belgian engineers laid a single line from Bruges to Brussels in less than a month after the Armistice was signed. Part of the credit for £9,000,000 found by Great Britain was spent on materials for repairing lines and rebuilding stations. An internal loan, the "Restauration Nationale," was raised. A quantity of new rolling stock was ordered in England and America, and from Belgian firms. In January 1919 it was possible to travel, though very slowly and in much discomfort, between Ostend and Brussels, and from Brussels to Boulogne or Paris; and since then the railways have returned to their old efficiency. This has not been accomplished without a heavy expenditure; and the railway tariffs have therefore been raised. In the beginning of 1920 the passenger rates levied before the war were increased, and 50 per cent. was added to the rates for various classes of goods.[1]

The rivers and canals, which intersect the country in all directions, are nearly as important to the development of Belgian trade as the railways.[2] Rising in France and crossing

[1] The principal classes of goods for which separate tariffs are available, the regulations under which they are carried, and the charges will be found in the *Report on the Economic Situation of Belgium* (1921–2), Appendix VIII.

[2] The rivers and canals are almost all connected. As may be supposed, the canals are trading rivals of the State railways; but, acting impartially in the interests of national commerce, the Belgian Governments have never opposed but always assisted the canals, some of which belong to the State and some to companies in which the State holds shares. The State fixes the tolls pay-

the frontier into Belgium, the Sambre passes close to the coal-fields which lie round Charleroi and Mons on its way to Namur, where it is merged in the wider current of the Meuse, which enters Belgium from France at Givet. From Namur the Meuse, now forming one river with the Sambre, flows to the Dutch frontier between Liége and Maastricht. Part of it is canalised from Liége to the frontier of Holland just beyond Visé; and if the Dutch would consent to this being continued to Venloo, there would be a channel deep enough for large vessels to carry the produce of Hainaut and Liége to Venloo, whence the river is navigable by steamer to the sea.[1] As it is, the chief waterway from Liége to Antwerp is by the "Canal de Jonction de la Meuse à l'Escaut." It begins at Maastricht, and vessels coming from Liége must pass through two Dutch Customs-houses, which is said to cause serious delay. This was one of several reasons why after the war there was a movement for the acquisition of the strip of Dutch Limburg which lies on the right bank of the river. But, in spite of the impediments to trade caused by Dutch commercial jealousy, the Sambre and the Meuse are of great value for the transport by water of coal and manufactured goods produced in the most important industrial districts of the country.

The Schelde, flowing out of France a short distance beyond its junction with the Scarpe, crosses the Belgian frontier south of Fontenoy, and flows through Oudenarde to Ghent, where it meets the Lys. Then, turning eastwards, it is joined by the Dendre, and continues its course to Antwerp. Here the river is rather more than a quarter of a mile wide, and so deep that, except at low water, ships of the largest tonnage can draw up at the quays. Some years previous to 1914 two new docks were constructed large enough to hold vessels drawing 30 feet of water; and there are also a number of docks for the use of small vessels and canal boats. The port is amply provided with dry docks, warehouses, hydraulic cranes, grain elevators, and other appliances necessary for loading and unloading, besides railways for the transport of goods to and from the

able by the owners of barges. On some canals there are no tolls; and on all of them transit is cheap. Before the war a ton of coal could be sent by water from Mons to Antwerp for, in English money, about half a crown.

[1] The Belgian canals are shown on the *Map of North-West Europe*, prepared by the Geographical section of our General Staff before the war. Most of them are traced on a map of the Seine, Meuse, and Rhine basins accompanying M. Kaeckenbeeck's *International Rivers*, and on a large map published by the "Scarborough Company" during the war. The best account, however, will be found in *Diplomatic and Consular Reports on the Canals and Waterways of Belgium*, published in April 1904, Misc. No. 604, Cd. 1767–8.

ships. In 1922 and 1923 new works to increase the accommodation for shipping, at a cost of nearly 50,000,000 francs, were commenced.

Before the war more than two-thirds in value of the total commerce of Belgium passed through Antwerp; and it need hardly be said that it was one of the most important centres of international trade. The bombardment in October 1914 did not seriously damage the city; and though the installations at the harbour suffered to some extent during the German occupation, they escaped the destruction which laid in ruins the outlying forts. But when the end of the war came the long line of quays and the docks, which used to be packed with the shipping of all nations, were empty. It was impressive to stand in the moonlight at the Tête de Flandre on the left bank, after the rearguard of the enemy had marched out, and hear on the other side the exultant shouts of the populace celebrating their deliverance in the streets, where black, yellow, and red flags, hidden during the occupation, hung from every window, while the tall spire of the Cathedral looked down on the silent river, on which not a ship was to be seen, and from which every sign of sea trade, the very life of the place, had vanished.

But Antwerp, in its long, eventful history, had seen worse times; and there was a wonderful recovery. The progress of the port has, with a few interruptions, been continuous; and this famous gateway to the Continent is again wide open. In the first year after the war 4,820 ships, with a tonnage of 5,245,048 tons, entered; in 1920 this number rose to 7,698, with a tonnage of 10,852,341 tons, and there had been a steady increase ever since. British shipping easily holds the first place; and in the interests of our carrying trade it is most desirable that British lines should make a point of doing all they can to maintain their hold on Antwerp. So far German shipping, once so prominent there, has, though some of the lines have resumed their sailings, not yet regained its former position; and there is every reason for believing that our mercantile marine can, if shippers do not neglect their opportunities and so lose the market at Antwerp, be for many long years supreme on the Schelde.[1]

From Antwerp ships and barges pass down the winding channels of the Schelde till they enter the Dutch waters of the

[1] The German and Austrian banks have been replaced by British and American houses. At Antwerp there are five American and three British banks. At Brussels there are three American and three British.

estuary between the Island of South Beveland on the right and Zeeland Flanders on the left. A canal cut across South Beveland is a common waterway for trade from Antwerp, by the East Schelde, the Hollandsche Diep, and the Waal, to Rotterdam or the Rhine. Farther down the river on the left bank is Terneuzen, whence a canal (opened in 1827, during the period of the Kingdom of the Netherlands) goes across the Dutch territory of Zeeland Flanders for nine miles till it reaches the Belgian frontier, and continues through East Flanders for some twenty miles to Ghent.

Most of the tourists who journey to Ghent visit the Château des Comtes, that grim feudal stronghold where Edward III feasted with Jacques van Artevelde, the splendid Gothic Hôtel de Ville, the Cour des Princes, where Charles V was born, the Church of St. Bavon, and perhaps the Carthusian Monastery, where, on Christmas Eve 1814, the Treaty of Peace between Great Britain and the United States of America was signed. But few find time to inspect the spacious harbour, where steam cranes and all the appliances of a modern port are installed, with warehouses which in pre-war days were piled high with merchandise from every quarter of the globe. Ghent has played a very considerable part in the economic development of modern Belgium. The canal from Terneuzen is more than 100 feet wide, and deep enough to receive large merchantmen. There is a standing dispute between the Belgians and the Dutch, who are said to obstruct improvements in the portion of the canal which passes through their territory, and thereby hinder the trade of Ghent. It was, however, flourishing before the war. Over 1,000 ships entered in 1913. In the autumn of 1918 the Germans, when they had to leave, blocked up the canal by sinking a number of boats, and destroyed the embankments, railway sidings, and cranes. Most of the damage was, however, made good within six months after the Armistice; 330 vessels entered in 1919; and next year, in spite of difficulties caused by a fire which destroyed some of the warehouses, the port was again in working order. The shipping which entered was largely British; and regular services were established with Great Britain and Ireland, Holland, France, and America.

From Ghent a canal, navigable by large barges, goes to Bruges, whence there is another canal and a railway to Zeebrugge on the coast between Knocke and Blankenberghe. The commercial future of Zeebrugge is uncertain. The canal from Bruges, which the Germans found so useful during the submarine campaign, till it was blocked by the British on the night

of April 22, 1918, is capable of receiving ships drawing 26 feet of water. But constant dredging is necessary in the harbour. So far the hopes with which it was opened in 1905 have scarcely been fulfilled; but an increase of trade will probably follow the establishment of the service of train ferries from Harwich. Railway trucks with goods from any part of Great Britain can be sent on, without breaking bulk, to Germany, France, Italy, Turkey and elsewhere on the Continent. One obstacle to the success of this scheme was the difference between the gauges on the British and some Continental railways. But the Belgian Government had bought 15,000 of the wagons used during the war on the Richborough ferry; and these were generously made over, free of cost, to the British and Belgian companies by whom the scheme was promoted.

The canal from Ghent to Bruges passes on to Ostend, where, under the auspices of Leopold II, the harbour was enlarged in the early years of this century. The chief value, however, of Ostend is its situation at the starting point of the railways which run to Antwerp, to Brussels and thence to Germany, and to the western districts and France.

Far inland at Brussels, almost in the middle of Belgium, a harbour was constructed many years ago. It is in communication with the Schelde, and therefore with the sea, by a canal (the Willebroek) which passes close to Vilvorde, a short distance north-east of Brussels, and joins the Rupel, which falls into the Schelde about six miles above Antwerp. On the west this canal also leads from Brussels by Hal to Charleroi. At first only vessels drawing about ten feet of water could use the port of Brussels; but it has lately been deepened and widened, so that seagoing ships with a draught of 19 feet can enter. The Dyle, on which Louvain stands, is connected with the Rupel by canal. A network of waterways, too numerous to mention in detail, is spread over the whole of Belgium, the most densely populated country in the world.

The daily use as highways for trade of rivers and canals, many of them connected with the great port of Antwerp, has naturally suggested, especially since the acquisition of the Congo Colony, that the number of seagoing ships sailing under the Belgian flag ought to be increased. Before the war the Mercantile Marine of Belgium was insignificant, consisting of no more than 125 ships. But in 1916 a company, the Lloyd Royal Belge, was created by Royal Charter with the object of founding a really important Mercantile Marine. The capital was 50,000,000 francs; and at the end of 1917 the Belgian

Government took up 25,000,000 francs' worth of debentures, to the amount of 100,000,000, which the company was authorised to issue. In August 1920 the Lloyd Royal Belge owned 92 vessels, some of which were built at Sunderland and Glasgow, and others bought from British shipping firms. Services have been established to America, India, Australia, China, and other parts of the world. A number of other shipping companies have been started ; and the Belgian Mercantile Marine is growing in importance. " Partly owing to this enterprise in Belgium, and partly owing to the transfer of ships under the Peace Treaty (more than half the amount provided for, 68,000 out of 128,000 tons having been delivered in 1920) the Belgian Mercantile Marine has largely increased in number and tonnage." [1]

The expense of restoring the railway and water communications, with the help of the British Credit and of loans raised in America and Norway, was a heavy burden on the resources of Belgium. In the spring of 1919 the Chambers decided that, while awaiting the payment of reparations by Germany, the nation as a whole must bear the cost of making good the losses which the war had brought upon the country. The State therefore became liable for the reconstruction of buildings which had been destroyed, for replacing livestock which had been confiscated, and machinery which had been stolen or destroyed, and also took over debts contracted by public bodies and individuals to meet fines imposed by the enemy, and to feed the people. Finding the sums required for these purposes created a difficult financial situation. In the year following the close of the war there was a deficit on the budget of 6,000,000,000 francs. Against this could be set 2,500,000,000 francs due by Germany as part of the reparations to which the Treaty of Versailles had given Belgium a priority claim. This sum was to be paid before May 1921 ; but it was very doubtful whether Germany would meet this obligation even then. It was necessary to find new sources of revenue. The railway, postal, and telegraph rates were increased ; and taxes, some as high as 80 per cent., were imposed on war profits. Legacies and income which had hitherto escaped were taxed. So were all public amusements, such as theatrical performances and moving pictures ; also beer, tobacco, and spirits.[2]

[1] *Report on the Economic Situation in Belgium*, pp. 126–7.

[2] To promote temperance, the sale of spirits for consumption in hotels, boarding-houses, restaurants, railway refreshment rooms, and any place of public resort, is now forbidden. The smallest quantity of spirits that can be bought is two litre bottles.

The service of the Public Debt was a heavy item. When the eventful year 1914 opened the Debt stood at 5,000,000,000 francs.[1] This was a burden which Belgium was well able to bear at that time. But during and after the war it began to mount up, while general expenditure increased. In the autumn of 1920 the Debt had risen to 34,000,000,000 ; and it was feared that it might reach 40,000,000,000. In addition there were Government bonds to be met ; and provision had to be made for repaying advances from the Allies between the signing of the Armistice on November 11, 1918 and the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles on April 19, 1919. It was at this juncture that M. Carton de Wiart formed his Government.[2] A policy of rigid economy was forthwith adopted. Expenditure by the Government on the purchase and distribution of food was reduced ; plans for new public works were abandoned ; increased customs duties were to be levied ; and additional taxation was to be imposed on the country. The result was that next year, though there was still a heavy deficit on the budget, the financial position was improved.

This was the effect of strict, unbending economy in all departments of the public service, and the adoption of vigorous measures by which it was expected that means would be found to meet the liabilities of the country. Hitherto in Belgium the revenue from import duties had represented rather less than 1½ per cent. of the value of all the imports. There was a tariff of 1½ francs a hundredweight on oats, and similarly low duties on some other foodstuffs. There was also an import duty on cattle and sheep ; and cattle could not be imported under four years old. There was a rather heavy duty on dead meat, which necessarily kept up the price, and was therefore unpopular with the working classes in the towns, who complained that they were made to suffer for the benefit of the farmers. These duties had, in fact, been levied rather for the protection of the farming interest than for revenue. *Ad valorem* duties were levied on the import of certain articles, such as household furniture, carriages, wall-papers, and other things in which the Belgian manufacturers might suffer from foreign competition. Though these undoubtedly acted as protective duties, there was no high tariff ; and Belgium for many years claimed to be practically a free-trade country. The financial situation, however, after the war made it necessary to find revenue by

[1] Including the share of the Public Debt of the Kingdom of the Netherlands laid on Belgium in 1839.

[2] *Supra*, p. 159.

taxing imports; and in 1920 and 1921 additional customs duties were laid on a number of articles.[1] The competition of Germany had always been severely felt and was likely to be increased by "dumping" after the war. To cope with this the duties payable on imports from that country, with the exception of foodstuffs and raw materials needed by Belgian industries, have now been doubled; and a law authorising the application of these increased duties to merchandise originating in all countries where the currency has depreciated more than that of Belgium came into force in April 1922.

Simultaneously with the increase of customs duties fresh direct taxation was imposed. The stamp duties were raised, and an additional duty of 10 centimes was put on cheques. There was already a tax of 33⅓ per cent. on "luxury entertainments"; and now a tax of 5 per cent. was laid on all payments for meals in restaurants. The death duties were raised. Owners of plate, jewellery, art collections, wines, and so forth had to pay an annual *ad valorem* tax of ½ per cent. A tax was also laid on betting.[2] A "taxe sur la transmission" put 1 per cent. on portable property brought into Belgium. This tax, expected to produce 200,000,000 francs a year, was opposed by the Labour-Socialists on the ground that it tended to raise prices; but they supported the other proposals of the Government. "It says a great deal for the willingness of all parties in Belgium to recognise the necessity for heavy taxation and general economy that the whole of the new taxation bill was passed without difficulty, the Socialists confining their protest to abstention from voting on the transmission tax, while voting for the Bill as a whole."[3]

The Government wished to avoid the risk of injuring the economic situation of the country by borrowing. But it was found necessary to raise a long term 6 per cent. Consolidated Loan, which was issued at 99 in October 1921. Investors in this stock (a very sound security, incomes from which pay only 2 per cent.) could subscribe either in cash or by converting

[1] A list of articles affected by the tariff changes will be found in the *Report on the Economic Situation of Belgium* (1921–2), pp. 115–119.

[2] The law of Belgium is not supposed to recognise betting; but bookmakers are licensed to bet on the race-courses; and they pay a certain fee for each day's racing. In 1922 the revenue from the tax on betting was 5,885,490 francs.

[3] *Report on Economic Situation* (1922), p. 26. Belgium had long been accustomed to a great variety of small direct taxes, on, for instance, domestic servants living in the house, pianos and advertisements in shop windows or placarded on walls. The advertisement tax cost practically nothing to collect, as it was levied by means of a special Government stamp placed on each advertisement by the advertiser.

holdings in Treasury Bonds. The sum raised by this means was 1,400,000,000 francs, found partly from cash and partly from Treasury Bonds. Another financial transaction, which proved a great success, was the issue of a Restoration Lottery Loan for 1,000,000,000 francs by the Co-operative Societies. It not only helped the Government, but gave persons of small means an opportunity of taking part in the restoration of the districts laid waste by the war.

The economic situation in Belgium has, of course, been affected by the fall in the franc. At first, immediately after the war, the depreciation of the franc was not very serious. This continued to be the case so long as imports from England were limited. But when trade was resumed the sterling value of the franc began to fall; and it must have been noticed that the rate of exchange, though fluctuating from time to time, has been steadily rising against Belgium, a state of things which it is difficult to understand, seeing how remarkable has been the success of the strenuous measures taken to recover from the effects of the war. It is very possible that the damage inflicted by the war on the resources of the Belgians, the increase of their paper currency, unaccompanied by a corresponding increase of their gold reserve, and the presence in their budgets of large sums figuring as "recoverable from Germany," may have caused a want of confidence in Belgian credit. This want of confidence, if it exists, does not seem justified. The economic recovery has already surpassed all expectations, in spite of the heavy burden on the resources of the country; and unless some unforeseen calamity occurs the financial position of Belgium will be, there is very good ground for believing, with full assurance, in the course of a few years as sound as ever, provided the reparations are forthcoming from Germany.

When the question of German indebtedness was discussed in the spring and summer of 1922 it was apparently expected in France that the Cabinet of Brussels would oppose anything in the shape of a moratorium. But the plan of M. Theunis and M. Jaspar, agreed to by the Reparations Commission, showed that this was not the case. Belgium relinquished immediate payment in cash, and agreed to take Bonds at six months date for the two instalments of the reparations which fell due on August 15 and September 15. On September 25 these Bonds, guaranteed by the Reichsbank, were delivered to M. Delacroix, the Belgian delegate on the Reparations Commission; and they were soon afterwards discounted at various foreign banks.

This temporary settlement of part of the Belgian claim, which virtually conceded a moratorium for six months, was somewhat of a surprise to a party among the Flamingants and their friends in Holland, who had always foretold that the Government would follow whatever course the French Ministers might take ; but it had the general approval of the country, which it relieved, for a time at least, from the necessity of deciding on delicate questions which might have arisen with France.

Though Germany was thus allowed time, there never was any intention to let her evade payment of the fullest possible reparations for the damage done to Belgium between 1914 and 1918. And so, in course of time, the Cabinet of Brussels most reluctantly decided to co-operate with France in the occupation of the Ruhr. The Belgians, however, know that it is on their own exertions and on the industrial resources of their country that they must chiefly rely in their valiant struggle for recovery.

The first of Belgian industries is *coal*-mining, which has been fully developed for a very long time ; in the middle of last century Belgium produced more coal than France. The Borinage in the south of Hainaut, the country round Charleroi, and the district between Charleroi and Mons, together with the province of Liége, form what is known as the Sambre and Meuse coal-field. The deepest coal is probably in the Borinage, where it is believed to be far below the depth of any of the shafts. In other parts of the Sambre and Meuse field the depth varies, and coal is found near the surface, especially in the neighbourhood of Namur. The mines yield coal of different qualities suitable for various purposes, for use in iron-works, gas-works, glass-works, rolling-mills, forges, and almost every description of industry.

On the north-east of Belgium is the Campine, a wide tract of country lying between Antwerp and Maastricht. It is a region of sand, marshes, rocks, heather, and pine-trees, unlike any other part of the country, and till recent years out of the beaten track, remote, mysterious, and seldom visited by strangers.[1] But in 1901 coal was discovered ; and for the next five years engineers were busily investigating the probable amount of the deposits and the means by which this new source of wealth could best be developed. It was not till 1909 that the first borings were made. Owing to the character of

[1] There is a charming essay on "La Campine ardente et mystique," in *Le Visage de mon pays*, by Vicomte Henri Davignon.

the soil opening mines has been a difficult and costly operation; but the coal of the Campine is chiefly of the long-flame variety, which is much needed in some Belgian industries, in gas-works for example, and of which there is not a sufficient supply in the Sambre and Meuse field. Coal-mining in the Campine is proceeding; since 1917 the production has risen from, in round numbers, 11,000 tons to nearly 300,000 tons; mining companies have raised fresh capital; and it is expected that the output will, after a few years, not only be yielding large profits, but will make it unnecessary for Belgium to import coal.[1]

Belgium, though close to the extensive *iron-ore* fields of Lorraine, the Saar district, and Luxembourg, is not rich in ore. At one time there used to be iron-mines in full working order in the provinces of Namur and Liége. They still exist; but for a long time the output gradually diminished till in one year shortly before the war it was worth less than £30,000. The country, while possessing ample supplies of coal, has therefore to import the necessary ore for use in the iron and steel industry from France, Luxembourg, and other countries. The headquarters of this industry are in the Sambre and Meuse district, where in 1913 the production of pig-iron was 2,500,000 tons. Exports were on a large scale, in the shape of rails, girders, plates, and other productions in metal. During the war the enemy robbed factories of their plant, deported to Germany operatives who refused to work for them, and put in prison the managers of several companies. When the end of the war was approaching, and the plan of permanently annexing Belgium had to be abandoned, the Imperial soldiery, no longer daring to commit murder and arson as at the beginning of the invasion, degenerated into a horde of brigands, who carried on, as part of a regular system intended by their superiors to prevent, or at least retard for a long time, the economic recovery of Belgium, the looting of factories and the destruction of machinery with such violence that, when they left in November 1918, the iron and steel industry was, like other Belgian industries, all but ruined.

The work of reconstruction was, however, begun at once; but, owing to the loss of machinery stolen by the enemy, and the time consumed in repairing the gutted factories, there was

[1] From a table on page 62 of the *Report on the Economic Situation* (1921–2) showing the monthly production of coal in Belgium during 1921, it appears that the largest production was in January, 2,041,010 tons, and the lowest in June, 1,700,480. The amounts varied during the year; but in December the production was 1,965,350. The average monthly production in 1913 is given as 1,903,460 tons.

a long delay. One very important company, the Société d'Ougrée-Marihaye, was seriously embarrassed by a strike, which did not collapse till the operatives (with whom miners in the employment of the company struck in sympathy) had lost several millions of francs in wages, and returned to work on the employers' terms. Labour troubles such as this, and the want of coal caused by exports to foreign countries, stood in the way of a speedy revival; but by the summer of 1921 there was sufficient production to make Belgian competition serious for English firms, who found they could not compete with Belgian prices. It appeared from trade returns that Belgian nuts and bolts could be bought in the Midlands for £24 a ton, when the English price was £29; and about this time it was reported from South Wales that Belgian steel was delivered at £7 10*s.* a ton, the local price being about £9. The only way to meet this was a reduction in English prices; and a tendency in that direction was observed towards the end of the year.

German competition has to be reckoned with; and Belgian manufacturers are convinced that new markets overseas are necessary if they are to regain what they lost by the war. Nevertheless, in the spring of 1922 the industry was improving; and there are signs that iron and steel will recover their former strong position among the productions which augment the resources of Belgium.

Another important source of wealth before the war was *zinc*. A metal which has to be extracted from special ores of which there is only a small and diminishing quantity in Belgium, almost the whole of the raw material required for its production was imported from Great Britain, Australia, Germany (mainly from Silesia), France, Spain, and some other countries; but in the amount produced Belgium came third, far in front of Great Britain, and behind only the United States and Germany. No less than a fifth of the whole world's output was produced by Belgium, about half of which was contributed by a single company, the Vieille Montagne; and there was a large export trade in both raw and finished zinc to Great Britain and elsewhere. Production fell to almost nothing during the war; and recovery was impeded by the high price of coal, a rise in wages, and also, it seems, by the difficulty in obtaining the raw material caused by the slow progress of negotiations for a contract with the British Government for supplies from Australia.

In the disturbed state of trade all over the world the future

of every industry is uncertain; but if adequate supplies are forthcoming there is good reason for believing that the zinc business will again flourish. It is already showing marked signs of a recovery which will enable it to make, as formerly, a substantial addition to the wealth of Belgium.

A great amount of Belgian capital has long been invested in all departments of engineering connected with the construction of steam engines for factories, railways, and ships, and in making electrical apparatus, tramway cars, railway carriages, motor-cars, cycles, and girders for bridges. The business of making all kinds of *machinery* is one of the most important of Belgian enterprises; and more than a thousand firms have often been engaged in it at the same time—a large number for so small a country. The best known of the works is at Seraing, near Liége, where the firm of John Cockerill and Company has its head offices in a building which was once a palace of the Bishop-Princes of the Principality of Liége, and where the first locomotive that ran on the Continent was built in 1835. The works at Seraing cover nearly 300 acres, on which there are coal-mines owned and worked by the company, and shops for making every species of machinery.

The people of Liége have long been famous for their skill in working steel and iron. In ancient times they forged in their own homes the weapons which they used in the civil wars which so often laid waste the Principality; and the manufacture of *fire-arms* for export was a lucrative branch of industry carried on almost entirely by the workmen in private shops of their own down to the time of the German invasion. The arms they made, some for sporting, and some for military purposes, were tested in a Proof-house at Liége, where 1,500,000 weapons passed the trials in 1913; and of these about 300,000 pounds' worth were exported to Germany and France, while a large quantity went to other countries.

During the war the attempt of the Germans to force the manufacturers and workmen to make arms to be used against their own countrymen failed; the factories and their contents were seized, and many of the workmen escaped to France and England, where they found congenial employment at Havre and Birmingham in turning out munitions for the Allies. Since the war a certain amount of trade has been done; but so many markets have been closed, tariffs have risen so high, the cost of production has been so much increased by shorter working hours and higher wages, and other countries have gained so much experience in the production of fire-arms for

use in either peace or war, that this industry, at one time so prominent among the commercial assets of Belgium, is not in a very prosperous condition. But machine construction, in all its forms, is established in each of the great industrial districts; and when the set-back caused by the war, and the general slackness of trade have been overcome, it cannot fail to be assisted towards complete recovery; first, by the land and water communications which enable goods to be carried in all directions within the country, and to the coast for export; secondly, by the ample supplies of coal, iron, and steel which are available; and thirdly, by the system of schools in which young Belgians with an aptitude for mechanics can obtain technical instruction.

The wealth produced from *textiles* has been from time immemorial, and still is, one of the most prolific of the economic resources of Belgium. Verviers, in the province of Liége, not far from the German frontier (it was entered by the invaders on the morning of August 4, 1914) is the centre of the *wool* industry.[1] The water in the neighbourhood is supposed to be exceptionally well suited for washing wool; and shortly before 1914 some two hundred mills were engaged in the various processes connected with the preparation of wool.[2] The war, during which machinery was destroyed or removed by the enemy, and a certain amount of trade fled to England, most of it to Yorkshire, injured the industry; but by the latest reports it is regaining the lost ground, though at Verviers progress had been retarded by frequent strikes.

The Germans played havoc with the *cotton* industry from one end of Belgium to another. Their procedure was to use up all the raw material they found, and confiscate any finished goods. After that most of the machinery, beltings, bearings, dynamos, brass fittings, copper, and so forth went off to Germany; and what remained was broken up till nothing was left of the mills but bare walls, with the roofs gone, and the very pavements destroyed.[3] At first, however, there was a

[1] Verviers is described in a charter of 1300 as a wool village; and in 1323 the Bishop of Liége relieved cloth made there from the payment of tolls.

[2] In Belgium, as elsewhere, fabrics made of mixed wool and cotton were rapidly replacing those made of pure wool.

[3] To give one example of how thoroughly this was done, the writer may mention having visited a large cotton mill in Ghent at the end of the war, and seen a jetty built by the enemy on a canal at the back of the building, with a powerful crane brought all the way from Germany, and put there to hoist some very heavy machinery on to barges in which it was to be taken away. The whole place was literally cleaned out; and a moderate estimate of the loss was 2,000,000 francs.

swift recovery after the war; and as soon as the machinery of the mills had been replenished imports of raw material began, and continued till they nearly reached the level of 1913. This was followed by a period of depression. After the spring of 1920 the trade languished for a time. Since then there has been a recovery. The spinning and weaving mills are now (1923) in full employment and would, but for the high price of yarns and cloth caused by the shortening of the working day to eight hours, which is said to add 12½ per cent. to the cost of production, be even more profitable than they are.

Most of the mills engaged in *linen*-weaving and thread-making, in which the Belgian provinces have always so greatly excelled, are in West and East Flanders. The water of the river Lys, on which Courtrai stands, is supposed to be the best in the world for soaking the flax.[1] But almost all the flax produced at Courtrai, where before the war there was a settlement of Irish business men, was sent to Belfast, and most of what was used at Ghent and other places came from Russia. When the Bolshevik rule put an end to this trade there was for a time increased cultivation in Belgium. Since 1921, however, the acreage devoted to this purpose has greatly diminished; but the linen-mills are now prosperous.

Not many years ago linen-weaving was almost entirely a rural industry, the people growing and bleaching their own flax, which they spun and wove in their homes. But now the manufacture is rapidly becoming a monopoly of large factories in the towns. *Lace-making*, however, is still carried on, though not altogether, as a home industry, skill in which has been handed down from generation to generation, particularly among the women of Belgium. Beginning no one can say when, it has survived through all the vicissitudes of the country. It is interesting to watch the women, old and young, some of them mere girls, sitting in front of their cottages in the villages, or in the humbler streets of the towns, with their wooden bobbins or their needles in their hands, working hour after hour on the slender threads, and weaving them, too often at the expense of their eyesight, into exquisite designs. During

[1] "Though small," says Mr. Rowntree, "it has played an important part in the industrial development of the country, because flax prepared in its waters produced the finest linen thread in the world. The establishment of the textile manufacture in Belgium, still one of its principal industries, was principally due to this fact, and it is not surprising that the Lys has come to be known as the 'Golden River.' It is curious that chemists have hitherto entirely failed to ascertain why flax prepared in its waters produces such fine linen" (*Land and Labour in Belgium*, p. 12).

his inquiries into the home industries of Belgium Mr. Rowntree found that towards the end of last century, in 1896, there were about 50,000 women lace-makers, but that the number, already far smaller than it had been twenty years before, was declining. This was doubtless owing to the rise of the lace factories, of which there are now between two and three hundred. But machine-made lace, produced wholesale by the factories, cannot compare in beauty of workmanship or commercial value with what is made by hand; and even if the factories grow in number, and lessen the personal pride of the lace-makers in their art, cheap and hastily made articles turned out by machinery cannot in the end hold their own against the finer class of work which, kept at a high standard by teaching given in the quiet seclusion of the convent schools, will always find purchasers in the markets of the outside world.

Lace-making has always been one of the best known of Belgian industries. Few of the strangers who flock to Bruges leave without paying a visit to the famous collection in the Gruthuise. Less is heard about the production of *glass*, which has, however, been a great source of Belgian wealth. An ancient industry on the banks of the Sambre and the Meuse from Charleroi to Liége, it has produced year after year vast quantities of glass of every kind. From Charleroi more than 200,000 tons of window glass were exported in 1913. In that year 31,000 tons of table and crystal glass were exported from the Province of Liége, where one company alone, the Société Anonyme des Crystalleries de Val St. Lambert (founded in 1825) employed 5,000 workmen. The purity and brilliance of this cut glass is well known to the trade; and 90 per cent. of the output from the St. Lambert Company was exported. Though the glass industry suffered, like other industries, from the depredations of the enemy during the war, it has apparently recovered more rapidly than any of them. Of the Val St. Lambert an incident, typical of Belgian energy and readiness to resume work, has been recorded. On the morning of November 11, 1918, news came that the Armistice had been declared; and before the sun set that day the first furnace of the glass works had been again lighted.

Unless there is a general collapse of trade the glass industry will no doubt continue to swell the resources of Belgium. Most of the raw materials are on the spot. The sand found in Hainaut and Namur is of good quality for glass-making; and still better is the wonderfully pure sand of the Campine, where a glass factory has been established since the war. The

possibilities of this business are thoroughly well understood. An association of Belgian glass-makers and bankers have subscribed a large amount of capital to promote a company for the manufacture of glass by the latest methods; it is proposed to found an organisation to assist and regulate the export trade; and some of the Belgian glass firms have recently extended their operations as far as China.

It is chiefly because of these industries, besides those engaged in producing artificial silk, hemp, jute, pottery, cement, chemicals, and many other manufactured articles, all of them helping to increase the volume of trade, that Belgium has so often been called a "Hive of Industry." But *agriculture* and the kindred rural employments hold a very important place in the economic life of the country. In the Middle Ages this industry was sedulously fostered by the Church, especially in the naturally barren lands behind the dunes on the Flemish coast. Close to the road from Furnes to La Panne is the site of what was once the famous Abbey of the Dunes. No trace of it remains; but there, in the thirteenth century, a hundred and fifty monks and more than two hundred of their disciples were working on the land. They drained the marshes and planted seeds where seeds would grow, until, after years of hard work, the Abbey of the Dunes was surrounded by wide fields which had been reclaimed and turned into a fertile oasis in the midst of a savage and inhospitable desert.[1] It was the same in other parts of Flanders, in Brabant, in Hainaut, and in Namur. The peasants received grants of the lands which they had reclaimed. No longer serfs, attached to, and transferred with, the soil they cultivated, "adscripti glebæ," they became, in course of time, independent farmers, free to consume the produce of the land themselves or sell it; and whenever, across the level plain, they saw a belfry they knew that among the houses round it there was a market-place. And so by degrees agriculture grew into an established industry, often in danger of ruin during the long years of war which desolated the country, but always making progress and sharing in the general prosperity, until at last, when the German invasion came, no country in Europe was so highly cultivated as Belgium, where, of a population estimated at about 7,500,000, 1,200,000 were classed as agricultural labourers.

The whole extent of Belgium is calculated at rather more than 7,000,000 acres, of which nearly 5,500,000 are used either

[1] Derode, *Histoire Religieuse de la Flandre Maritime*, p. 86.

as hayfields and pastureland for livestock, or for the cultivation of wheat, rye, oats, barley, potatoes, turnips, sugar-beet, chicory, and other crops. Owing to the acreage being so small for so dense a population, the number of labourers for each unit of the soil is very large. The farms are small, averaging about 12 acres; and more than 80 per cent. of the farmers are working their own lands. The cultivation therefore is thoroughly well done. The soil on most of these lands is sandy, and would be barren if it had not been brought into good condition by intensely hard work, coupled with the study of scientific farming, which is encouraged by the Government system of technical education in agriculture. The ground is heavily fed with natural and artificial manures, and produces large and valuable crops. In the year before the war between 15,000 and 16,000 tons of raw *beet-sugar* and nearly 100,000 tons of refined sugar were exported. Of *chicory*, that vegetable which is so little used in England except to adulterate coffee, but which is a favourite article of diet in Belgium, between 300,000 and 400,000 tons were produced, and of *potatoes* 3,000,000 tons. It may almost be said that every yard of land capable of bearing crops was under cultivation. Wheat had to be imported, as a sufficient quantity could not be raised; but with that exception enough foodstuffs were produced to feed the population. All who travelled through the agricultural districts must have been struck by the endless succession of fields bearing fine crops, fruitful gardens and orchards.

After the war the plain of West Flanders was a melancholy sight, the earth pitted with shell-holes, farmhouses and cottages in ruins everywhere, and near Pervyse miles of land, formerly yielding rich harvests, covered with water, mud, and reeds. Recovery seemed impossible, but two years of endless toil brought back the landscape to something like its former appearance; and now the Flemings, with most of their farmhouses and cottages rebuilt, are on the way to complete recovery of their prosperity as cultivators of the soil. On the whole, it may be said that all over Belgium the agricultural industry is re-established. Ninety-five per cent. of the devastated land is again under cultivation. The first crops on the restored farms, however, failed. During the occupation the Germans cut down trees over an area of 24,000 acres, and worth 200,000,000 of gold francs. The birds who thus lost their homes (like so many of the human population) had not returned when the first sowings began; and the crops were destroyed

by caterpillars and insects. The Government is, therefore, giving young trees to the farmers for planting along the roads, and taking other steps to encourage forestry.

There are various accounts of the amount of *livestock* in Belgium before the war; but a reliable estimate puts it at 317,000 horses, 1,879,000 head of cattle, 1,494,000 pigs, and many flocks of sheep. The Flemish *horse*, ancestor of the heavy English draught-horse, was once famous. The breed, however, has deteriorated, partly owing, it is said, to the number of the best stallions which were bought for war-horses by the Kings of England in ancient days. At present the best are the cart-horses of Brabant and the Ardennes. In 1850 the Government formed a National Stud at Tervueren, where a number of stallions, including some thoroughbreds, stood for a time. But this institution did not improve the breed, and was soon abolished. Private horsebreeding, on the other hand, was a great success, largely through the good work done by "Le Trait de Cheval Belge," a Society formed to encourage horse-breeding. Belgium draught-horses won many prizes at international shows in different parts of Europe; some stallions were sold at the high price of 100,000 francs each; and horses were annually exported to the value of 50,000,000 francs.

This was one of the commercial assets of Belgium which the German Government resolved to destroy. They began by confiscating all the best stallions and mares they could find. Then they forced farmers and owners of horses to bring in their studs, under threat of a heavy fine on those who did not obey, fixed their own price, took the animals away to Germany, forbade, except under special licence, any breeding from mares left in Belgium, and, in order to complete the ruin of the industry, issued a command that all two-year-olds were to be slaughtered. The number of horses carried off is said to have been 92,000. Under the Treaty of Versailles Germany undertook to return within three months 200 stallions (3 to 7 years), 5,000 mares (3 to 7 years), and 5,000 fillies (18 months to 3 years) of the large Belgian type. With these it was hoped to recommence horse-breeding; and when a show was organised by Le Trait de Cheval Belge several owners produced valuable stallions and mares which they had somehow managed to conceal from the enemy during the occupation. In the course of 1921 the Germans sent back 13,626 horses; and, as the number in the country is increasing, exportation has already become once more a profitable business.

Between 1846 and 1906 the number of *cattle* in Belgium

rose by 48 per cent., though the figures for 1906 exclude stock on farms of less than 2½ acres.[1] In that year the number was 1,779,678. In 1913 it had increased to 1,879,000 ; but farmers preferred to breed horses, and there was little export of cattle and even less of dairy produce. In fact, both cattle and dairy produce were imported to some extent. Thus cattle-breeding has not enriched the external trade of Belgium (though the amount of stock per acre is larger than in Great Britain, France, or Germany), and is therefore not to be reckoned among the commercial resources of the country. Before the war, however, most of the beef, milk, and butter required for internal consumption was produced in Belgium ; and the losses of cattle during the war were a hardship, the Germans having taken 560,000 head, besides killing a great number to feed their armies. The Treaty of Versailles provided for the return within three months of 50,000 cows, 40,000 heifers, and 2,000 young bulls ; but of these only 69,000 had been restored by the middle of the year 1921.[2]

A large amount of capital is invested in the cultivation of *plants, flowers,* and *fruit.* In many towns there is a miniature Covent Garden, where a brisk business is done each morning, usually in the open air ; but the chief seat of the horticultural industry is Ghent, the "City of Flowers," with its miles of glass-houses full of rare plants. Brussels and the surrounding districts are celebrated for their hot-house grapes ; and near Malines and Louvain there are acres of flower-gardens. Foreign buyers frequent these places ; and there is a huge export trade which adds many millions of francs to the national wealth.

What may be called the natural economic resources of Belgium—that is to say, all that the soil of the country yields in the shape, for example, of such productions as coal and the fruits of agriculture—either remain as they were before the war or are capable of being restored to their former conditions. As we have seen, great progress has been made in the work of restoration. But this has laid a heavy burden on the people ; and the financial position is such that there can be no complete recovery for many years unless Germany adds very substantially to the reparations she has already made. The Public Debt has risen from 5,000,000,000 francs in 1914

[1] Rowntree, *Land and Labour : Lessons from Belgium,* p. 174.

[2] When the German forces were retreating through Limburg, driving herds before them, they were followed by Belgian women who identified their own cows, and called on the soldiers to give them back ; but the cattle and carts laden with stolen furniture crossed the Meuse and went on over that part of Holland to the Rhineland.

to nearly 36,000,000,000, and amounts to 4,740 francs per head of the population, as compared with 2,744 in France and 3,074 in the United States. A heavy burden is the mass of paper marks which the enemy forced the Belgians to take during the occupation at the rate of 1 franc 25 centimes per mark. After the Armistice this remained as a dead weight of paper money, amounting to 7 milliards of marks, which the Belgian Government withdrew from circulation, partly in exchange for notes of the Banque Nationale, and partly by the issue of Treasury Bonds. The only fresh notes issued in Belgium since the Armistice are those printed to replace (at 1 franc 25 centimes per mark) the German paper which is still lying in the cellars of the Bank at Brussels, and represents a debt due by Germany which ought in justice to be included among the reparations. Then there is a war debt of 175,000,000 dollars, plus interest, owing to the United States. The United States not having ratified the Treaty of Versailles, Belgium has not been relieved of this debt, which, though payment has not yet been demanded, figures in the statements of American claims against Europe. The price of living has gone up. This is a hardship, not only to the working classes, who, though their wages are now four times what they were before the war, find that the cost of almost everything they have to buy has risen proportionally, but also to persons in a higher station, whose incomes are still as low as ever. The salary of a judge in the Courts of Appeal is only £300. The head of the Cour de Cassation receives £500. A lieutenant-general in the army has £300. All Cabinet Ministers are paid the same modest salary—£550 a year, with an official house. They were formerly allowed motor-cars; but, for the sake of economy, this luxury has been cut off since April 1, 1923. All classes, in fact, are feeling the pressure of the financial situation caused by the war.

In the spring of 1923 the value of the reparations which Belgium had received in cash, bills, and supplies (coal, timber, horses, cattle, etc.) was estimated at 1,729,000,000 gold marks. The last bond, which matured on June 15, was paid. But that payment did not of course go far to extinguish the sums due to Belgium; and the Belgian Government, while more anxious than any other Government in Europe to act in concert with Great Britain, found they could not accept the plan put forward by the Cabinet of London for the settlement of the reparations, by which Germany was to be relieved from so great a part of her liabilities. The economic future of Belgium is so

gravely affected by this question of reparations that agreement was impossible.[1]

[1] The British Department of Overseas Trade is (1923) represented in Belgium by Mr. J. Picton Bagge, Commercial Secretary to the Embassy in Brussels. His *Report on the Economic and Financial Conditions in Belgium, with an Annexe on the Economic Situation in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg*, published in 1923, is full of valuable information. It has been most favourably received by the Belgian press, one paper describing it as "a sound economic monograph on Belgium in 1923, the like of which, so far as we know, does not exist."

C—MISCELLANEOUS

DEFENCE

The Belgian Army is recruited by compulsory service. The period of service with the colours was fixed by a law of July 1923 at 12 months for infantry and 13 months for cavalry, artillery, and engineers, with 2 additional months during the occupation of the Ruhr. The total period of service is 25 years, of which 15 years are "active" and 10 in the Territorial Army.

In the event of the yearly contingent exceeding 49,500—of which 44,000 would be fighting troops and 5,500 auxiliary services—certain privileged classes and individuals will be exempted and passed direct to the Active Reserve.

Recruiting is done in areas each of which supplies a Division, the areas being chosen with a view to proportioning the number of Walloons and Flemings within the Division. As far as possible men will be stationed within 50 km. of their homes.

The general effects of the Law are to give longer service, better trained troops for the Ruhr and occupied areas, and a rational recruiting system combining Flemish and Walloon elements, and town and country dwellers.

The First Army comprises 4 Army Corps and Army Troops. Each Corps consists of 2 Infantry Divisions (each of 3 regiments of infantry, 1 regiment of artillery, 1 machine-gun battalion, etc.), and Corps Troops (of cavalry, engineers, artillery, etc.). The Army Troops comprise a Cavalry Division, an Artillery Division, the whole Air Force (16 fighting and 10 other squadrons), a Tank Regiment, a Brigade of Engineers, etc.

A Second Army, of 8 Divisions of Infantry and 4 Regiments of Artillery, drawn from Active Reserve troops, would be available in time of war, as well as a large reserve supply of food and a number of auxiliary troops, destined for both armies.

The strength of the army on a peace footing is now limited to about 70,000. Its war footing will probably be about 200,000.

The army estimates for 1922 amounted to 484,019,146 francs.

Uniform: Khaki.

Rifle: Mauser, ·301″.

Field gun: 75 mm. Field howitzer: 105 mm.

THE MEN OF LETTERS

During the period between 1795 and 1814, when the Belgian provinces belonged to France, and afterwards between 1815 and 1830, when they were united to Holland, "la vie intellectuelle," or "geestesleven," as a Fleming might perhaps call it, was at a very low ebb. Throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras France was so occupied by wars and political changes that literature was in abeyance; and it was not till some fifteen years after the collapse of the Empire that a revival of learning came. The period between 1815 and 1830 was barren.

In Germany it was the same. Kant, Herder, Schiller, Fichte were off the scene by 1830. Niebuhr died in January 1831; and in the autumn of that year Hegel was buried near the tomb of Fichte. Goethe, almost the last survivor of the Weimar school, was still alive; but he was on the brink of the grave.

In Great Britain Keats, Shelley, and Byron died before 1830. Scott lingered on till 1832, and was outlived by Coleridge for two years more. But, though Wordsworth, Southey, and Thomas Campbell had several years of life before them, the British world of letters had lost many of its best-known names. A classic chapter of literature was closed. "Everyone was asleep; literature, politics, society were all fast asleep. The Bourbons slumbered peacefully in France, and the Holy Alliance in Europe, as if their repose was to last for ever. The literary genius of the commencement of the century had passed its zenith, and its heroes were peacefully resting on their laurels. Sometimes a note would be sounded from Byron or the author of *Waverley*; but the days of *Childe Harold* and *Ivanhoe* were over. Nothing prefigured the future, while little remained of the past. Wordsworth wrote nothing; Coleridge nothing; Campbell nothing; the *Edinburgh Review* had nothing to criticise, and had subsided into a state of chronic torpor." [1]

While the revival of letters in France, the date of which may be placed about the time of the July Revolution and the Belgian demand for independence, was marked by the birth of the

[1] Lord Moncreiff, *Rectorial Address* (January 18, 1869).

Romantic Movement, with such men of letters as Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, or Alfred de Musset, there was no corresponding movement in Belgium. Those Belgians who took up their pens and wrote devoted themselves almost exclusively to the study of history, and history in its dullest shape. The true historian, Taine says, is never sure whether the culture of his own country is the best, and can be as happy out of it as in it. Judged by this standard, there were few, if any, true historians in Belgium; for the Belgians confined themselves to the history of their own country, and seldom, if ever, travelled beyond its restricted boundaries. This was natural. The Belgian provinces had just become for the first time the home of an independent people; and they now felt a stronger interest than ever before in the past of the territory which was in the future to be really their own.

In a country, moreover, where for a long time the pursuit of knowledge had been obstructed by frequent wars and civil commotions, literature, both in its higher and its lower forms, was inevitably neglected; and when peace and settled conditions of life came there were few, even among the best educated of the population, who were equal to attempting authorship which required more than the "shallow stream of thought" which Johnson told Mrs. Thrale, perhaps with a good deal of truth, was all that historians need possess.[1] And, as Professor Pirenne, the foremost of living Belgian historians, has reminded his countrymen, to narrate the story of his own homeland is one of the easiest tasks which an author can undertake. Most of the authorities lie open to his hand, easily accessible in public libraries or private collections; and, though many works of this kind have been famous over all the world, such as Macaulay's *History of England*, the commonplace task of compiling a fairly creditable and useful volume does not call for literary attainments of a very high order. It was found in Belgium that as the intellectual life of the country developed historical writings gave way to works of a higher order.[2]

During the fifty years which followed the disruption of the

[1] "But surely," said Boswell on this occasion, "an historian has reflections." "Why, yes, sir," Johnson answered, "and so has a cat when she catches a mouse for her kittens."

[2] "La prédominance," Pirenne says, "des recherches historiques atteste très très souvent, dans une nation, le niveau peu élevé de la culture savante. Pour la Belgique, en particulier, on ne peut guère douter qu'il en ait été ainsi, lorsqu'on observe qu'à mesure que la vie intellectuelle s'y développe, l'histoire y perd peu à peu la domination exclusive qu'elle avait exercée tout d'abord, et qu'à côté d'elle de nouvelles disciplines se font leur place au soleil." *L'Académie Royale de Belgique, depuis sa Fondation*, p. 172. (Published in 1922.)

Kingdom of the Netherlands, the industry of the Belgian historians was incessant. There was neither a Michelet, a Carlyle, nor a Macaulay among them; and they occupied a humble place on the roll of historical authors. But their works are well arranged, carefully composed, sometimes fully "documented," and give wonderfully complete accounts of the transactions with which they deal. They take no wide views. Their outlook is provincial. The "philosophy of history" does not interest them. They are painstaking chroniclers, who present a narrative of plain facts which are often within their own experience. The best known of them were practical politicians. Baron Nothomb, author of the *Essai historique et politique sur la Révolution Belge*, a large work in two volumes, was a prominent actor in the scenes which he describes. Baron de Gerlache, whose history of the Low Countries from 1814 to 1830 is so well known, was the Catholic leader during the events which preceded the revolt of 1830. Lebeau, who published as early as 1833 his *Souvenirs Personnels et Correspondance Diplomatique*, was the Minister of State whose speech in the National Congress at Brussels persuaded a hostile majority of deputies to accept the terms of separation from Holland, and thus made possible the accession of Leopold I. Louis de Potter, the intransigent revolutionary, also added to the mass of contemporary history by publishing his recollections.[1]

Most of the Belgian histories written during the early days of independence were produced by members of the *Académie Royale de Belgique*. This institution traces its origin back to the Austrian period, when, in May 1769, a small party of men of letters, only eight in number, most of whom came from Louvain or Ghent, met in Brussels, and founded a "Société Littéraire." This venture did not make progress. It was soon apparent that it must be reorganised and put on stronger foundations; and in December 1772, when Prince Charles of Lorraine was Governor of the Austrian Netherlands, the Empress Maria Theresa issued letters-patent establishing an "Académie Impériale et Royale des Sciences et des Belles-Lettres." The members of the Literary Society were elected members of the Academy; and for some years there were frequent gatherings for the discussion of literary subjects. After a time the disturbed state of the country, as well as the constant interference of the Imperial Government at Vienna, made complete success impossible. But the members continued

[1] *Souvenirs Personnels* (1839).

to meet, to publish volumes, and decorate the authors with medals till May 1794, when Austria finally lost her Belgian dominions, and the Academy was dissolved.

During the French period the Academy shared the fate of all the Associations which had formerly existed in the territories conquered by the Republic. It was suppressed until William I became King of the Netherlands. He restored it in 1816. From that time till the separation from Holland most of the Academicians, nominated by the King, were Dutch; but it is said that, even in the year 1830, the Belgian and Dutch members were on perfectly cordial terms. After the creation of the Kingdom of Belgium the Academy, under the patronage of the two Leopolds, gradually rose to importance, and now flourishes as the Académie Royale de Belgique, under the patronage of King Albert.

At first the output of historical publications in Belgium was almost entirely in the hands of the Academicians. But in 1834–1835 a Royal Historical Commission was appointed consisting of seven members, all of whom already were, or soon became, members of the Academy. It was now that so many prolific writers of contemporary history (histories "of our own times") began to appear. The Commission was, nevertheless, instructed to conduct researches into more ancient periods and a commencement was made with the *Collection des Chroniques belges inédites* of which twelve quarto volumes had been published by 1845.[1] In that year the Government decided that the Royal Historical Commission and the Academy should work together, and this system of collaboration has continued ever since.

One of the best-known historians of this period was Professor Moke,[2] of the University of Ghent, an Academician whose useful *Histoire de la Belgique* went through several editions, and is still recognised as a standard work. It covers the history of the Low Countries from the time of Julius Cæsar to the French Revolution. Written in plain language, without any affectation of "style," it has no literary distinction except clearness of expression, and may be taken as a good example

[1] "*Le Bulletin*, publié dès l'année même de la fondation en 1834, peut-être considéré comme la première revue savante qui dans le domaine des sciences de l'érudition, ait paru dans le pays. Des savants étrangers lui apporterent bientôt leur collaboration. Il fut dès l'abord ce qu'il est resté depuis; l'organe central des recherches d'histoire nationale" (*L'Académie Royale de Belgique*, p. 184). Since 1834 the *Bulletin* has been published regularly, except during the war.

[2] 1803–62.

of the unpretentious writings of the Belgian historians of his day.

The labours of Gachard,[1] another Academician, among the archives at Simancas made his *Correspondance de Philippe II sur les Affaires des Pays-Bas* a valuable contribution to general history, as well as to the history of the Low Countries. His *Archives des États Généraux des Pays-Bas* and his *Correspondance de Marguerite de Parme* also stand out as genuine pieces of original research, in which it has often been observed that he had an instinctive sense of proportion, in dealing with his materials, which led him to select, from a pile of manuscripts, exactly those documents which historians were likely to find useful. To Gachard belongs the merit of having been one of the few Belgian historians who have extended their studies beyond the Low Countries.

Another archivist was Wauters,[2] now somewhat out of date, but to whom a debt of gratitude is due by students of the history of Belgium, when they take up the laboriously compiled *Table Chronologique des Chartres et Diplomes imprimes concernant l'histoire de la Belgique*, or read his account of the early history of the Communes.

The influence of the Romantic Movement has been discerned in the History of Flanders by Kervyn de Lettenhove,[3] whose brilliant style has been compared to the style of Chateaubriand. He plunged deep into the records of the Middle Ages, and like Gachard, though not so fully, studied the archives of other countries besides his own. One of his contemporaries was Théodore Juste,[4] whose *Histoire de Belgique*, published in three bulky volumes, is the source to which most English writers who are interested in the story of the Low Countries have gone for information. The study of these volumes should be followed by a close examination of *La Révolution Belge de* 1830 and *Le Congrès National de Belgique*, two works which Juste brought out between 1872 and 1880. Though written without the experience, intimate knowledge, and authority of Baron de Gerlache or Baron Nothomb, these works, if read together with Juste's monographs on the founders of the Belgian Kingdom, will give all the information which the ordinary reader can require on the subject of the revolt of 1830 and its authors.

The stream of historical matter flowed on year after year; but, with the exception of Gachard, and to a certain extent of Lettenhove, the Belgian writers were intensely provincial in their outlook. They were men of letters who, though living

[1] 1800–85. [2] 1817–98. [3] 1817–91. [4] 1818–88.

in a country which was virtually a borderland, clung in the nineteenth century to the particularist ideas of the Middle Ages, and evidently failed to realise how closely the history of Belgium was intertwined with the history of other European countries, and particularly with the history of Germany and France. They were apt to treat Belgian affairs as if they had seldom been connected with the affairs of any other country, and this necessarily diminished the historical value of their works. Some inspiration came from France, but none from beyond the Rhine. The Belgian historians paid little, or rather no, attention to the scientific methods of Ranke, Mommsen, or von Sybel, till Professor Kurth of Liége,[1] with Professor Fredericq of Ghent,[2] set the example of extending the sphere of historical inquiries further than any of their predecessors, and may be said to have founded a new school, of which Professor Henri Pirenne, of Ghent, is the most distinguished representative.

A native of Verviers, Henri Pirenne read under Kurth at Liége. From Liége he went as a student to Paris, Berlin, and Leipzig, and returned to Belgium admirably equipped for the career of an historian. A monograph on the local institutions of Dinant[3] was followed some years later by a graphic account of the Communal history[4]; but he had already been appointed Professor of History at the State University of Ghent, and had commenced the work of his life, the *Histoire de Belgique*, of which four volumes had been published when the Great War began in 1914.[5]

This work, which ought to be translated into English, has had a popular success in Belgium similar to the popular success of Macaulay, or of Green's *History of the English People*. Totally free from the old limitations which, arising partly from prejudice and partly from want of extensive study, made so many of the Belgian writers present what probably most foreign readers are convinced is a mistaken conception of Belgian history, Pirenne takes a wide view, and maintains that the inhabitants of his country and their culture are made up from a variety of elements. Their culture, in his eyes, lies open, like the frontiers of the land they live in, and is capable of exhibiting the finest ingredients of Franco-German civilisa-

[1] 1847–1916.
[2] 1850–1920.
[3] *Histoire de la Constitution de la Ville de Dinant* (1889).
[4] *Les Anciennes Démocraties des Pays-Bas* (1910).
[5] The first volume appeared in 1900, and the fourth, which came down to the Peace of Westphalia, in 1911.

tion harmoniously combined. A Walloon by birth, he knows the Flemish language, and has no doubt that Belgium can enjoy a common national life without sacrificing the Walloons to the Flemings or the Flemings to the Walloons. In a word, rejecting the mediæval regionalism which is still the creed of the extreme section of the Flamingant party, he devoutly believes in the existence of a Belgian nation which has been evolved from the turmoil and confusions of the past.

It may be said that for many years after 1830 historians held the field of Belgian authorship. With very few exceptions they wrote in French. But in course of time other forms of literature appeared; and it has often been said that there are two literatures in Belgium, French and Flemish. A fierce controversy has raged, and is indeed still raging, over the question of whether Flanders is, or ever has been, bilingual. That is a point which, if they think it worth while quarrelling about, experts in linguistic lore must decide among themselves. No foreigner, whether Dutch or English, should concern himself about it. All he needs to know is that he hears two languages spoken in Belgium, and also that the authors whose names are most familiar to him, such as Maeterlinck, Verhaeren, or Lemonnier, write in French, though they are Flemings. This, however, he can understand; for a Belgian man of letters, if he writes in Flemish, must be content to have few readers, unless his works are translated into other languages. The fact, however, that the noble tongue which may be called the *lingua franca* of literature is known and spoken not only by the Walloons, but also by all educated Flemings (many of whom cannot speak a word of Flemish), and is also the medium of expression which the best-known Flemish authors use for communicating with the great world of letters, does not interfere with the convenient classification of Belgian writers as those who follow *la littérature belge d'expression française*, and those who employ Flemish. For the literature of a country is not entirely a question of language. If it were, *Pelleas et Melisande* and *La Vie des Abeilles*, would belong to the literature of France, just as those who wrote the *Cottar's Saturday Night* and the *Waverley Novels* could be claimed as English authors.

Distinctions are often drawn between Flemish and Walloon literature. We hear of the mystic dreaminess of the Flemings, of their crude realism, of the want of form in what they write, and, on the other hand, of the clear, bright, classic style of the Walloons. But it would not be difficult to show, if a minute investigation were possible, that the works of Walloons are

often steeped in as much dreamy mysticism as any works of the Flemings, and that there are Flemings who write with as much clear, logical precision as any of the Walloons. The men of letters of both races, however, whether they choose to express themselves in Flemish or in French, produce a literature one characteristic of which is common to both. It is often pervaded, except of course among those who deal with the dry bones of history, by a spirit of mystical idealism. A recent author has rightly said that this feature of Belgian literature is quite dissociated from any dogmatic faith.[1] This is true. But every Belgian, whether Walloon or Fleming, breathes from his earliest days, and all through life, whatever religious or political opinions he may profess, an atmosphere impregnated with the essence of Mediævalism, especially on religious questions. Perhaps this strikes a foreigner the more forcibly because he finds himself living in a country which lies between sceptical France, free-thinking Germany (despite the large Catholic element in the Rhineland), and Protestant Holland. But the Catholic Faith, with its forms and ceremonies, bulks so largely in the everyday life of the Belgian people that one is led to think that it is the influence of the Church, its miracles, its supernatural claims, its partial glimpses of another world, by which the minds of the people, high and low, rich and poor, educated and uneducated alike, are unconsciously impressed, and not any peculiar type of intellect, which has really produced the mysticism which can undoubtedly be found in almost every form of Belgian literature.

There is no escape from this mediæval atmosphere. Within a stone's-throw from the busy wharves of Antwerp, where the clang of machinery loading and unloading ships is heard all day, you enter the dim twilight of the Cathedral, where Rubens' "Descent from the Cross" hangs upon the wall, and the people are bending low before the altars and the images of the Holy Virgin and the Saints. It is the same everywhere; and it is under an ever-present sense of mystery, of the supernatural, that Belgian men of letters cannot but live and work. The literature of a country, if it is to be of any value, must not only show the intellectual acquirements, and express the opinions, of the educated and the learned, but must also reflect the emotions which stir the hearts of the common people, and display their habits, both good and bad. It is so with the literature of Belgium, where novelists, poets, and dramatists,

[1] Émile Cammaerts, *Belgium rom the Roman Invasion to the Present Day*, p. 338.

though probably they have never been conscious of it, have worked under the perpetual influence of those mysteries in the midst of which they, like their fathers before them, have always lived ; at the same time their writings expose, and sometimes even exaggerate, the follies or vices of their countrymen.

Camille Lemonnier's novel, *Le Petit Homme de Dieu*, gives a picture of how the mind of a Belgian of humble station might be affected by taking part in the Procession of Penitents, redolent of mediæval mysteries, which walks every summer through the quaint old Flemish town of Furnes.

Lemonnier took this scene exactly as it is enacted at the present day with all its mystic realism in the streets of Furnes. The hero of his novel is Ivo Mabbe, a working man who has walked so long as Jesus in the procession that at last he comes to believe that he himself is actually the Christ. Lemonnier shows insight when he makes a Flemish peasant suffer from a delusion such as this, which becomes so strong that he will not marry the Mary Magdalene of the procession, Cordula, a girl to whom he has been long engaged. Christ can pardon her sins, but cannot pollute Himself by taking her to wife ! And the *Petit Homme de Dieu* goes further. He visits among the poor, mixes with the lowest, and puts in practice the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. And then the inevitable happens, just as Lemonnier knew it would have happened in real life, to Mabbe. His comrades of the procession shrink from him. They laugh at him. They call him a fool. This only encourages him. At last the scales fall from his eyes, and he knows that he is not Jesus. He has given way to spiritual pride. But to be truly Christlike he must be humble ; and so the tale goes on, till in the end he is wedded to Cordula.

This is emphatically a Flemish novel, though Lemonnier always wrote in French. He was the author of many other novels, of which *Un Mâle*, published in 1881, is probably the best known.

There is much that is unhealthy in the novels of Lemonnier ; and he was several times prosecuted for writings which were held to be *contra bonos mores*. But there is little or nothing to censure in, for example, *Le Vent dans les Moulins*, where an interesting and suggestive picture is drawn of Flanders and the industrious Flemings. And he struck a high note in *Les Charniers*, which was published in 1871. He had already defended France in a brochure, the quality of which was such that for a time Victor Hugo was supposed to be the author ; and in *Les Charniers* he expressed his hatred of war with a force

of eloquence and conviction which raised this work to the level of Zola's *Débâcle* and Bertha von Suttner's *Die Waffen Unter.*

This master of style and language, by far the greatest figure in *la littérature belge d'expression française*, was fortunate in the moment of his death ; for he died in the summer of 1913, and thus escaped witnessing the horrors of the Four Years War.

Lemonnier's first work was *Nos Flamands*, published in 1869, with the French motto " Nous-mêmes ou périr," but obviously meant to rouse up the Flemings, literature in whose language seemed about to perish. The earliest leader, however, of what is known as the Flemish Renaissance was the journalist Jan Frans Willems.[1] But the line of Belgian men of letters writing Flemish in the nineteenth century really opened with Hendrik Conscience.[2] Born at Antwerp in the closing years of Napoleon's reign, with a French father and a Flemish mother, he was the child of one of the marriages which were common at that time, and which, had the Empire lasted, would have helped to consolidate the rule of France over her Belgian provinces. After the fall of Napoleon, and during the Kingdom of the Netherlands, he lived at Antwerp till 1830, when he served with the revolutionary forces. Eight years later he published his most popular work, *De Leeuw van Vlaanderen*, a romance inspired, there can be no doubt, by the Waverley novels, and probably most of all by *Quentin Durward*, which was very widely read in the Netherlands.[3] This " Lion of Flanders," melodramatic and appealing strongly to the provincial passions of the Flemings, celebrated their achievements in the struggle of the fourteenth century against Philip the Fair of France, and the famous victory at the Battle of the Golden Spurs. Hendrik Conscience was not, however, a particularist, but rather a Belgian nationalist, whom it is difficult to imagine supporting any " Flamingant " movement aiming at the separation of the Flemish from the Walloon provinces.

It was not till thirty years after the publication of the *Lion of Flanders* that he was elected a member of the Académie Royale ; but he long held a prominent place among Belgian men of letters. The Place Conscience near the Cathedral of Antwerp is named after him ; and in the Municipal Library there he is com-

[1] 1793–1846.

[2] 1812–83.

[3] William I was at Liége soon after the publication of *Quentin Durward*, and insisted, on the authority of Scott, that Flemish used to be the language spoken there. Baron de Gerlache told him that was a mistake of Scott's ; but the King held to his own opinion. De Gerlache, *Histoire du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, II, 214.

memorated by a statue. Hendrik Conscience, it is said, "taught his Flemish countrymen to read."

Three years before the Belgian Revolution, when Hendrik Conscience was a lad of fifteen, playing about in the streets of Antwerp, and picking up any scraps of knowledge he could find, a woman in the service of the Apostolic Nuncio at Munich gave birth to a son, of whom the Reverend Nuncio himself was suspected to be the father.[1] It is quite likely that this was merely a piece of scandalous gossip; but the boy, who bore the name of Charles de Coster, received an education superior to his mother's station, studied literature at Brussels, and made his bow to the public with *Les Légendes Flamandes* in the year 1857.[2]

He wrote these stories of by-gone Flemish life in archaic French, which he thought best suited to their period. His *Contes Brabançonnes*, which appeared four years later, were in nineteenth-century French; but he returned to the ancient dialect in the work by which he is best known, the wondrous tale of Ulenspiegel, the title of which would have warmed the heart of Sir Walter Scott.[3] The *Legend of Ulenspiegel* is one of those works which has always been more talked about than read.[4] There has never been a really large reading public in Belgium. This was notably the case in the lifetime of De Coster, when poverty was the lot of an author, unless he had a private fortune or was in the public service; and, though he was made a Professor at the University of Brussels three years after the publication of *Ulenspiegel*, De Coster was a very poor man indeed when he died in 1879. Perhaps if he had been asked the question which Oliver Goldsmith was asked on his deathbed by Dr. Turton his answer would have been the same.

About the time of De Coster's death a revival of literature was at hand. Max Waller[5] founded *La Jeune Belgique*. George Rodenbach, who wrote that sombre story *Bruges la Morte*, came to the front. Lemonnier was one of the new school. George Eekhoud must be named, though he used his fine powers

[1] Bithell, *Contemporary Belgian Literature*, p. 28.

[2] An English translation was published in 1921. (Chatto & Windus, London.)

[3] "La Légende et les Aventures héroïques, joyeuses et glorieuses d'Ulenspiegel et de Lamme Goedzak au pays de Flandres et ailleurs."

[4] "Only in one country has this prose epic been justly appreciated as a book to be read; the Germans, with their well-known logic, claim it as a *German* work, as a book which glorifies the sterling Germanic character (in the spirit of Pan-Germanism), and shows the wickedness and inferiority of the Latin races" (Bithell, *Contemporary Belgian Literature*, p. 40).

[5] The *nom-de-plume* of Maurice Warlomont.

as a man of letters, even something which was almost genius, to teach anarchy in the name of socialism, to encourage a bitter war of classes, and to pollute the literature of his country by the most obscene of writings. A long catalogue of Belgian authors writing novels, poetry, dramas, besides works on history and law, during the last forty years, could easily be compiled. The most familiar names are, of course, the names of Maurice Maeterlinck and Émile Verhaeren; but their works are so well known and so widely read, and have been so much discussed in France, Belgium, Great Britain, America, and other countries that there is really nothing left to say about them.

On August 20, 1914 the Palais des Académies was appropriated, in violation of the Hague conventions, by German troops, who expelled the officials. The building was turned into a hospital. Valuable books in the library were scattered about and damaged. Many of the Archives were destroyed or stolen. A collection of rare autographs and medals was pillaged. Works of art were mutilated. Most of the furniture was broken up or carried away. All who went there soon after the Armistice can bear witness to the state in which the disciples of Teutonic culture left the rooms in which the Belgian historians and other men of letters had been accustomed to meet.

Professor Pirenne and his brother shared the fate of the Burgomaster Max, and were deported to Germany. But the Academicians who were left at liberty not only fearlessly refused to recognise the separation of the Walloon from the Flemish provinces, but addressed to the German Governor a solemn protest against the cruel deportations of working men. Meetings were held at intervals during the occupation; but it was not till January 1919 that regular business could be resumed. Among the foreign Associates were several who had signed the notorious Manifesto of the ninety-three German Professors at the beginning of the war; and one of the first decisions of the Academy was that all nationals of the Central Powers must be excluded from membership.

In August 1922 the Academy celebrated the completion of one hundred and fifty years since, in the reign of the Empress Maria Theresa and under the auspices of Prince Charles of Lorraine, letters-patent had come from Vienna authorising the establishment of an Academy at Brussels, and the history of what is now the Académie Royale de Belgique began. Next year, in April 1923, the fifth International Congress of Historical Studies was held at Brussels. It was the first since the war

(the last had met in London, 1913), and historians from all countries, except Germany and Austria, had been invited. The meetings, which lasted for a week, were held under the patronage of King Albert and presided over by Professor Pirenne, in the Palais des Académies, now restored almost to what it was before the invasion. The attendance, particularly of British, French, and American historians, was very large. In the intervals between the reading and discussion of learned papers, the foreign delegates were entertained with boundless hospitality; and each day the sun shone brightly on the gay capital of Brabant.

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